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# SAVED BY THE SWORD



ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

KD 16081





# SAVED BY THE SWORD

*A ROMANCE OF THE GRECO-TURKISH WAR*

BY

ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

AUTHOR OF "A SON OF MARS," "MASKED IN MYSTERY," "SQUIRE JOHN,"  
"HER RESCUE FROM THE TURKS," "SAVED BY THE SWORD,"  
"A BAR SINISTER," "A GODDESS OF AFRICA,"  
"THE GIRL FROM HONG-KONG"



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# SAVED BY THE SWORD.

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## BOOK ONE.

### THE GATES OF INDIA.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### A GUARDSMAN IN TEHERAN.

AFTER spending three weeks at Teheran, the quaint Persian capital, Thaddeus Brown was positive he had thoroughly exhausted all the sights. Some of these had filled him with satisfaction, for he was a lover of the *bizarre*, the Oriental and picturesque; while at the same time he had gazed upon other spectacles quite calculated to haunt the memory for years, such was their hideous character.

One does not have to penetrate the African jungle with a daring British expedition to the "City of Blood," as Benim has been called, in order to witness human beings crucified and otherwise tortured—in Persia it is no uncommon sight, and Thaddeus had grown somewhat accustomed to discovering wretched brigands swinging head downward from the parapet of the bridge.

He had visited the Towers of Silence, where the Parsees, as at Bombay, lay their dead upon platforms, and the ravenous vultures perform the duties of grave-diggers, leaving nothing but the bones to fall through the grating into the quicklime below; he had looked upon the shrine of Shah Zadeh Abdul where crowds worshipped, and listened to the execrable Parsee band of musicians greeting the rising of the sun with abominable melody from their instruments, for these people are followers of Zoroaster and fire-worshippers.

He had seen all this and much more, having the *entree* to the palace which, including the harem, the king's *berine*, *ushams-al-amara* or palace of the sun, and other offices, formed a square, with streets on all sides.

He had haunted mosques and bazars, had watched the ridiculous whirling dervishes, played chess in some of the tea-houses or *tchai-chans* with the natives who sat cross-legged on rugs, and even loitered in the horsemarket where the Persian owners awaited customers for their steeds, killing time by smoking their *kilians*, often called the "hubble-bubble," presenting a strange contrast in their blue and green cotton *kufians*, belted at the waist, to the more active Arabians with their striped mantles, and silk *kafeyas*, or tasselled handkerchiefs, twisted about their heads.

Though these scenes had been of keen interest to

Thaddeus for a time they had long since palled upon his curiosity.

Still he lingered, as though it were a religious duty to kill time, and no place offered better inducements than old Teheran.

There was a method in his madness, a magnet that held him to the Persian capital long after he had exhausted its pleasures and longed to set eyes on cities of gay Europe more to his fancy. Thaddeus was a soldier—true, he had never been really baptized in the blood of battle, for England during the years that passed since his days at Eton and Oxford had had no occasion to call upon her gallant volunteers to face foreign foes. Which fact was one of the causes that took our captain abroad—an earnest desire to see something of military life in Egypt and India.

In this laudable ambition he had been only partly successful, and was now returning by way of Afghanistan and Persia when the strange series of adventures with which we have to do opened a new field before him.

The magnet that held him fast did not consist of a charming female face—on the contrary, it was a crafty physiognomy adorned by a pair of keen eyes and a fierce military mustache, the whole forming a part and parcel of one General Ivan Skoubekoff, a famous Russian soldier, diplomat, and skilled organizer who seemed to have a very decided mission in Teheran.

And Thaddeus, knowing the nature of this born schemer's stay in the Shah's dominions, had actually devoted himself to the task of his undoing; which fact at first appeared to amuse the Russian, who naturally considered an inexperienced British guardsman as little better than a toy soldier when brought in competition with his vast and profound knowledge in the line of intrigue.

Thaddeus, however, was playing a part. He had come to Teheran for a purpose, having been selected as the queen's representative to foil the evident intentions of the Russian diplomat. Any ordinary ambassador coming with the pomp of his office, would have been compelled to fight Skoubekoff under disadvantages—this simple globe-trotter was enabled to gain private hearings with the Shah, and deliver the important messages that had been intrusted to his keeping.

And British influence had won the day, even as on many other occasions when Russian schemers had sought to open the road to India to the legions of the White Czar.

The Shah of Persia as well as the Ameer of Afghanistan had given to Thaddeus the most positive assurances of their friendship for Great Britain, and solemnly promised that should the hill tribes of northern India break out in rebellion, as seemed probable

even then, instead of secretly encouraging the Mad Mullah, all of their influence would be thrown against the rebels.

This was the condition of affairs at the time we turn our attention to Thaddeus.

The Russian general discovered too late that he had actually been beaten in astute diplomacy by a mere captain of volunteers—he a veteran of bloody Plevna and a score of other battles, who had won the decorations he wore not only on the field of strife, but in advancing the service of the mighty Czar in Asian and European courts.

It was an awful blow to Skoubekoff. He would not believe it could be possible, and still hung on, hoping for a change in the tide.

His bearing toward Thaddeus changed—instead of a supercilious sneer he now greeted him with a black scowl of hatred.

Little the volunteer cared. His reports and the precious documents had been sent on under a strong guard, and were bound to finally reach London. He only lingered because Skoubekoff did—somehow he thought it his duty to show the Russian he feared him not.

Year by year Russia has advanced along the road to India. Her *robats* or wayside houses of refuge, erected to all intents and purposes through charity, may be

found along the road to Herat and almost to the gates of India.

The day is surely coming when upon the soil of Asia these two giants will engage in a death grapple. England is preparing against that time by making the finest of soldiers out of her Ghoorkas Bengal Lancers and Sepoys, and Russia will never accomplish the design she has hugged to her heart for half a century.

Meanwhile the Giant of the North amuses herself with a vast railway extending to the Pacific across Siberia and reaches out an eager hand toward Corea and China, to again run up against England, backed by Japan, with even Germany and France interested in the deal. She played a clever game of chess nearer home, with the Balkan States, Turkey and Greece as the pawns who were mere puppets in her hands—the result was a war over Crete, in which Russia not only hoped to advance her interests toward seizing Constantinople, but expected Turkish victories to so inflame the passions of England's millions of Mohammedan vassals in Egypt and India, that a tremendous religious war would open, again to the advantage of the Czar.

These were exceedingly interesting moves upon the chessboard of nations, and the more Thaddeus studied the stupendous problem the deeper grew his desire to engage in diplomacy.

Unless some unexpected event occurred Russia would

push no nearer her rich goal that year, and the tremendous effect of the Queen's Jubilee, at which many Eastern potentates were expected to be present, might be counted on to rivet their adhesion to the British Empire.

Thaddeus had mastered enough of the Persian tongue and customs to converse with the Shah, who appeared to have conceived quite a fancy for the blue-eyed guardsman.

Recently the ruler of Persia had been stricken by a murderer's hand, and the new Shah retained vivid memories of his recent visit to England, where he had been treated right royally as an ally whose favor was worth seeking.

The day was declining, and it would not be long ere at sunset the shrill cry of the *muezzin*, from tower and minaret, called the faithful to prayer, while the *Zend Avesta* of Zoroaster or the Koran of Mohammed would be read by some *hadjee* or pilgrim in the market place.

At such an hour Teheran, bathed by the declining light of the sun, seemed a picture to be remembered. One forgot her deformities and no longer beheld the wretched figures swinging head down from bridge and gallows' tree. The soft glow seemed to gild all with the magic of an artist's brush, and the effect was indeed charming.



Thaddeus had a little poetry in his composition, though ordinarily quite a matter-of-fact fellow, and being in a particularly pleasant frame of mind, since he had just received a black look from the baffled Russian diplomat passing in a carriage, he allowed himself to admire the dreamy scene, and even suffered a prowling yellow cur, such as infests the streets of Teheran, to sniff at his heels without rewarding his curiosity with the usual kick.

There is a high tide to everything, after which comes the ebb—Thaddeus had reached that point, and would never again know the placid peace that reigned in his heart at the hour before sunset on this day in early spring.

It came about in an unusual way.

As he stood in front of the tavern at which he had lodgings, and which was run by an enterprising Gaul, he caught sight of a female figure advancing hastily toward him.

Thaddeus forgot to puff at his atrocious cigar—he even neglected to watch the odd *katichee* who was driving a string of gayly caparisoned mules along the highway, their tiny bells tinkling merrily in the way dear to a Persian's heart.

For the figure speeding toward him was not only that of a woman, but a deucedly pretty one at that, without question a pert English maid, as her appearance indicated to his educated eye.

"What's in the wind now?" muttered the guardsman, a little uneasily, for though past the age of twenty-eight, Thaddeus had never been accounted a ladies' man, being constitutionally shy.

As the girl drew near he noted her saucy face, and immediately judged she was a character far removed from the ordinary.

In which conclusion he was absolutely correct, as time proved to his complete satisfaction.

She immediately laid a neat hand on his sleeve with a familiarity none but a London lady's maid could boast, and exclaimed impetuously:

" 'Ave Hi the oner hof addressing Mr. Thaddeus Brown?"

Although somewhat taken aback the guardsman admitted the soft impeachment as to his name.

"Well, my missus wishes to see you hin the 'otel."

Evidently this saucy young person believed the wishes of her mistress to be as positive as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

"Would some other time do?" asked Thaddeus, with a dim idea that chance might float him out of old Teheran by another dawn, when he would escape an interview with the expected British matron and tourist.

"The missus said has Hi should bring you hin now," tightening her hold upon his arm.

"Well, lead on, Susan," he said, tossing aside his cigar with the resignation of a martyr going to the stake while to himself he muttered gloomily, "such a beastly shame—but I wonder how the old lady learned my name, you know."

## CHAPTER II.

"MADEMOISELLE OHIOAGO."

THE girl gave a saucy flirt to her head.

"Which my name hisn't Susan, hat all, but plain Polly 'Awkins, hat your service, sir," sweeping the amused guardsman a courtesy.

"Ah! beg pardon, Hawkins, I'll be sure to remember in the future. I once had a Polly—a most beautiful creature with a red top—came from the African forest, I believe."

The girl pretended to be on her dignity, but there was a droll twinkle in her eye that told as plainly as words could have done how favorably impressed she had been with this fellow British subject encountered under Persian skies—there is a peculiar sympathy between people of the same tongue meeting on a foreign strand—at home they might never deign to notice each other; but among strangers a telepathic bond seems to arise to cover the occasion.

"Hare you coming, Mr. Brown?" she said stiffly.

"I am only waiting for you to lead the way," he

answered, and then added confidentially: "Would you mind telling me how in the deuce the old lady learned my name?"

At which frank, boyish question the pert maid seemed aghast, though quickly recovering, for it must needs be a thunderbolt that could continue to depress Polly's bubbling spirits any great length of time.

"Why, Lor' bless you, sir, they teaches 'em to read hout in Hamerica, hand my missus isn't too hold to see what Hi showed 'er hin the book."

"Ah! yes, the register—good M. Prevost keeps one, and made me sign when I arrived—how stupid of me not to think of that, to be sure. Go on, Polly, I am coming."

He followed at her heels, and as a young bachelor has eyes in his head, Thaddeus could not help noticing what a trim figure Phyllis had, and how saucily she carried herself.

Evidently she was a character seldom seen off the comedy stage.

The captain admired her *chic* from the start, although just at present, with such weighty matters of state on his mind, he was even less inclined to pay any attention to the gentler sex than under ordinary conditions.

Into the tavern they went, Thaddeus grumbling to himself about the dreadful bore it would be to meet

an old lady who might consume much of his precious time, merely for the sake of social intercourse with some one who spoke English in this benighted foreign land.

An American—well, he had no great fancy for the matronly cousins across the sea who toured the world and made themselves disagreeable on account of their newly acquired wealth—he believed they were little if any improvement on the austere British matron who became an icicle as soon as she set out to travel.

So, while he trotted after the pretty Poll who had been sent to fetch him into an audience, he found himself drawing a mental picture of the bold and resolute “missus” whose will, according to her maid, no one ever dared cross.

Doubtless the result was quite satisfactory at the time, but it only served to accentuate the shock that almost overwhelmed him a minute later when Polly ushered him into a room with the remark:

“ ‘Ere ’e his, Miss Nina, but ’e did come mighty unwilling like, Hi do declare.”

Then Thaddeus stood rooted to the spot. We have all heard of the Pompeiian soldier who stood at his post of duty until covered with the falling ashes. They found him there many centuries later, turned into stone. Thaddeus Brown gave promise of going this heroic historic character one better, since he ap-

peared changed into a rock, without the process of years.

Polly's "old lady" turned out to be a very magnetic and handsome young woman. There was something extraordinarily attractive about her, that must win attention and admiration, no matter whether in gay Paris and London or when encountered in Teheran—or Singapore.

There she stood smiling before him, the same self-reliant young woman for whom fortune had given him an opportunity to do a little favor while at this last named outpost of British East India trade.

How vividly it flashed before his mind. What a fool he must seem to stand there mute in her glorious presence. He could see her smile as though amused. No man likes to find himself an object of ridicule, under any conditions, and with a mighty effort our valiant guardsman threw aside the singular spell that apparently bound him.

"Really, you know, I beg your pardon for seeming so stupid—somehow I understood her—Polly I mean—to say her mistress was an elderly lady, which will I am sure account for my dazed appearance."

Upon which Miss Nina broke out into a ringing laugh so merry and infectious that Thaddeus found himself joining in with that degree of restraint which one always feels when the joke is on himself.

"Very well said, Captain Brown, and after such a clever explanation I am quite ready to absolve you from all degrees of stupidity. We are cousins, you know—and speak the same mother tongue. On the strength of that, as well as the service you once did me in Singapore, we should be good friends; and so I'm going to sink formalities and shake hands with you."

With that she extended a small member which Thaddeus was charmed to inclose in his own generous palm, nor did he appear in any haste to let it escape again.

"Don't mention that trifling service—I assure you it was nothing. I only regretted that our steamer left the harbor early the next morning, so that I had no opportunity of learning the name of the owner of that wonderful headgear which I was so fortunate as to fish out of the water and restore."

"And I have laughed over the circumstance as you must have done, many times since; and how singular that we should meet again under such peculiar conditions."

Thaddeus as yet knew next to nothing about the "peculiar conditions," and supposed she referred to the fact of their being surrounded by foreign scenes; naturally enough he murmured fervently:

"And how pleased that it has occurred."

"Ah! that remains to be seen. Perhaps you will



not feel like repeating that flattery once you learn what has induced me to seek this interview."

"I am positive of it," he was impelled to say, as though in the hands of some power that dictated his actions regardless of his pleasure.

"Because," she continued steadily, watching him with those big gray eyes, under which he seemed enthralled, "because I am about to ask a *great* favor of you!"

"Consider it already granted then, if it lies in my power," was the guardsman's prompt reply.

It would have amused as well as startled some of his old comrades-in-arms to have heard him, for be it known this same Thaddeus had never played the part of an Adonis or a Romeo, and consequently had been made the recipient of much good-natured chaff at the hands of those less favored by fortune with good looks and the necessary lucre, but gifted with bold spirits in love as well as in war.

But they say every dog has his day, and while that of Captain Thad had been very slow in arriving, perhaps the fever might by its virulence atone for other shortcomings.

At least the symptoms of the diagnosis all indicated a very strong attack.

The American girl seemed affected by the genuine warmth of his words.

"Indeed, you are most kind to say as much, and I only hope you can oblige me without doing yourself or your mission to Teheran any harm."

Thaddeus pricked up his ears, so to speak—what could she know of his "mission" to Persia? Of course, he had not wholly kept his light under a bushel, but then the fact of his being England's accredited agent in defeating the Russian diplomat's plans could not be generally known.

"It is only fair that in the start I introduce myself to you. My name is Nina Sherwood, and I am from that magic city of the West, known throughout the world, Chicago. Indeed, our good host here, M. Prevost, insists on calling me Mlle. Chicago. I hope I deserve such a progressive, go-head title, at least.

"My father was an American, my mother a native of Athens whom he married when serving as United States Consul there. Ah! sir, she might have served Byron or any other poet as a model for the fair Grecian maid of his son."

"I can well believe that," he said almost involuntarily, and there was a look in his admiring eyes that brought a quick blush to her cheeks.

"We will say no more upon that subject if you please. I am thus the daughter of an American, and yet with the blood of the old Greeks in my veins, for

my mother came of a family who were proud to trace their lineage far back into the glorious past.

"You can imagine then how my spirit has gone out in sympathy toward that brave little country now face to face with their old foes, the Turks. Every throb of my heart beats for them. I have contributed almost my entire year's income to their cause, and did not the most urgent affairs necessitate my being here in this miserable capital I would hasten on wings of patriotism to offer my services as a hospital nurse—anything whereby I could prove that while an American, I cannot forget that Athens was the home of my mother, and that I have a proud share in all her past glorious history."

Thaddeus heard this with inward admiration. He doubted very much whether just so remarkable a girl had ever lived before as Nina Sherwood. Somehow his thoughts went out toward the famous women of history—in his confused frame of mind he could not decide whether she might be likened to Semiramede, Cleopatra, the Queen of Sheba, Charlotte Corday or Joan of Arc; but he favored the heroic Maid of Orleans.

At all events, the more he saw of Mlle. Chicago, the greater became his infatuation.

Love may be aroused by beauty alone, but it feeds best upon other traits that inspire respect; and surely this self-possessed young Yankee girl standing there

with glowing cheeks and enthusiastic mien, thrilling with patriotism and an avowed desire to assist a Christian people against the Oriental hordes of the sultan, was a sight for the gods of Mount Olympus.

It was at least one which poor Thaddeus Brown would never succeed in getting out of his mind, and which marked a turning point in his destiny.

"Believe me, Miss Nina, I honor you for such motives. On my part the unfeeling Turk has no share in my sympathy, nor in that of the general British public, although for years we have bolstered up his stay in Europe simply to prevent Russia from securing Constantinople, and not through love of the sultan. But you spoke of my being in a position to do you a service. Will you mention it, please, and give me additional claims on your friendship. You do not seem to have—er, a father or other male escort with you, and if I can be of service to you, command me."

"I understand your strict English style of looking at such matters, sir; we Americans do not take things in the same way; besides, Hawkins is really as good as a male escort, and can be depended on in a pinch; while I myself learned how to use firearms as well as ride a broncho while on my father's Texas ranch. All of which may appear very odd in your eyes, perhaps."

"Not at all, not at all—I do not look at such matters in the way of the severe British matron who is often

troubled with mental strabismus. In fact, I rather admire the independence of our fair American cousins, as numbers of other Englishmen better able to judge than myself have done before me."

"Mr. Brown, or rather Captain Brown I should say, you need not fear for your future—you are surely cut out for a diplomat, and with the remarkably clever start you have made here, I shall expect to see you occupying some important European post ere a great while."

"Oh! I hope *you* will," he remarked with peculiar emphasis that gave a double meaning to the words, and immediately added, "but how do you know that I represent anything more than an ordinary guardsman seeing the sights of this Asiatic country in which my nation has such constant and keen an interest?"

"Simply from words of bitter denunciation and chagrin which General Skoubekoff dropped when you passed an hour ago without seeing us."

"You know him then, this bold Russian?" starting.

"We were formally introduced in Calcutta some time back, by an old friend of my father, and upon seeing me here the general has renewed the acquaintance. But I would not presume to ask the favor from Skoubekoff that I mean to from you."

"Which I consider a great compliment," gallantly bowing.

"Ah! wait until you hear the request. Perhaps you may hesitate or refuse me point blank," archly.

"Then kindly relieve my suspense," he laughed.

"Listen then. It is of vital importance to me that I have a speedy audience with the great Shah, the ruler of Persia, and I depend upon you, Captain Brown, to accomplish what General Skoubekoff could not have done."

## CHAPTER III.

## AMONG THE JANIZARIES.

THADDEUS heard what Mlle. Chicago said with no little consternation. She was such a determined looking young woman, even though possessing so charming a personality, that he at once found himself speculating as to what this mission could be that demanded a personal audience with the autocrat of the Persian dominions.

He had heard and read so much of late about such desperate conspirators as the Nihilists of Russia, with some highly born feminine member of the band awarded the task of carrying out the infamous decree of the secret court, that somehow his first thought was of such a bold enterprise.

These Americans are equal to anything, and the ordinary Britisher is often at a loss what to make of their daring; so it was not to be wondered at that the guardsman allowed his mind to play with these wild fancies for a moment.

Then he recalled his scattered senses, as an appeal-

ing shock came from the luminous gray eyes—it would almost have melted a heart of stone, and surely Thaddeus had no ossified organ where the center of life should be.

“Well, I promised you,” he said slowly.

“But—you are at liberty to change your mind.”

“I do not wish to do so,” declared the guardsman with growing eagerness.

“It is not always necessary to possess the wonderful powers of a Svengali in order to hypnotize a subject—from time immemorial has a pair of dancing feminine eyes been able to make slaves of free-born British subjects, and it must ever be so while men have hearts to love.”

“Oh! I thank you, Mr. Brown, ever so much. It is most important that I manage to have a private interview with the shah, and I was quite in despair as to how I could manage it, for these Eastern monarchs, always in fear of the assassin, are very difficult to approach. Possibly the general could have accomplished it for me, but—somehow, I preferred to be under obligations to you, for you know we are cousins, and after all the Russian is a foreigner.”

“Yes, a wolf endeavoring to break into the sheepfold,” said Thaddeus, bitterly and with cause, since he had fresh in his mind the designs of Skoubekoff upon Khyber Pass and the other gates of India, once



they fell into the hands of the hordes from the hill tribes, aroused to the frenzy of a religious war by the reported successes of the Mohammedan Turks against the Greeks.

The time seemed to be fast approaching when conditions would necessitate handling the case without gloves, and when the story of the Crimea must be repeated.

"Well, I am going to thank you in advance for your courtesy—I may have to leave Teheran in something of a hurry, you see, and not find a good opportunity again. And I assure you I fully appreciate the kindly spirit that influences you to help a lone female in distress. I trust that the same measure of generosity will be meted out by some stranger equally gallant, should the necessity arise in conjunction with one you love—your wife perhaps——"

"But I am a bachelor," exclaimed Thaddeus, quickly and with a broad smile, never seeing, stupid man, the pit that had been so artfully dug beneath his feet, and not even realizing that he had promptly floundered into it.

"Well—your sister then," with a satisfied smile.

"I have five at home, dear girls one and all, and I can appreciate your kind wishes. But I fear you overrate the favor. His majesty is always glad to meet foreign ladies, especially good-looking ones, and I understand he has a keen eye for female beauty."

Mlle. Chicago gave one of her merry laughs.

"Yes, all Eastern potentates prove this by having a harem full of beauties. But a truce to compliments. My business with the shah is not that of the ordinary tourist, anxious to touch the hand of a real live prince. It is far more serious, since a human life may be involved. Are you at liberty *now*?"

The sudden business-like question rattled Thaddeus a trifle, since he had believed to-morrow would do, and "to-morrow" always mellows trouble.

"You mean you would like to interview his serene majesty to-day?"

"I dare delay no longer. Tell me, is it possible to accomplish this thing?"

And Thaddeus, being still under the spell, said "yes"—he would have gone even further if necessary, in order to oblige Mlle. Chicago. Undoubtedly the knights did not all cease to exist when the days of chivalry were past, and brave men are just as ready to dare all for the sake of a woman's smile as in times of yore.

"When will you take me to him?" she asked.

"In half an hour the palace will be lighted up, and I have had an audience with his majesty at such a time. Let us say then."

"That will suit me nicely. The sooner the ordeal is over the better I shall be pleased."

Somehow Thaddeus was struck with the singularity of this last sentence. It made him a little uneasy.

Why did she mention such a thing as an "ordeal?" Could she mean the presentation to his serene highness? Mlle. Chicago did not look like a young woman who would have an extra flutter of the heart over such a trifling matter. On the whole Thaddeus found much to marvel at in the situation.

He remembered suddenly that she had declared her visit to Teheran to be one of business—that she did not wish to meet the shah merely out of ordinary curiosity, but because she had a sacred mission in connection with this *recontre*.

Ah! there was still more.

What was it she had remarked about thanking the gallant guardsman in advance, because she "might have to leave Teheran in something of a hurry, you know, and not have an opportunity again?"

Ugh! his blood ran cold as he thought once more of Nihilists, of Charlotte Corday who slew the leader of the French Commune in his bath, and other similar pleasant historical characters.

Then, whether an attempt upon the young shah's life were successful or a failure, the result would be disastrous both with regard to his mission and his own personal safety. And yet, when he came to survey the face of Nina Sherwood, all doubts took wing.

That calm and charming countenance could not belong to a desperate conspirator. He could read determination there, but this girl was an American, and as such could not enter into any plot that had for its object the taking of life.

Then and there he vowed himself willing to trust his honor and life in her hands.

It was going pretty far, considering the fact that up to half an hour ago he had never heard Mlle. Chicago's voice save when she called her thanks across the waters of Singapore Harbor after his fortunate rescue of her dainty headgear.

He put the whole thing resolutely out of his mind, and proceeded to chat with her as though they might be old friends.

After a while she again reverted to the incident of her lost and drowning hat.

"It was ridiculous—and how strange that fate should bring us together here of all places—how nice that you are in a position to again lay me under heavy obligations. But then, you men do not remember such little incidents long. No doubt if I had not recalled it to your mind you would never have thought of it again."

Again a trap—the artful minx.

Thaddeus looked steadily at her with the air of a man who is revolving a question in his mind.

Then, as if deciding upon his course, and resolving to throw himself upon the mercy of the court like a culprit who pleads guilty to the charge, he deliberately placed a hand inside his coat and drew out a Russian leather notebook, which evidently contained papers of value.

Mlle. Chicago's eyes grew round with wonder as she witnessed these solemn movements. Was he about to make her sign a document of some sort, agreeing not to offend the august shah in any way? Perhaps some such weird thought may have flashed into her mind.

Who knows?

Thaddeus carelessly flipped over paper after paper, some of them perhaps representing great value. He appeared to be searching for something.

She saw him stop and pick some object up with great care, almost reverence.

"Ah! do you have any recollection of that, Miss Nina?" he said, smiling.

She looked at the object more closely and the color flashed into her cheeks.

"It—is—a ribbon," she stammered.

"Yes, a pale blue ribbon."

"Apparently damaged by—water."

"Sea-water, as salt as any in the harbor of old Singapore," he continued.

Then she laughed aloud.

"You wicked man. Do you know I've an idea where that came from?"

"Did you not miss it? When I was handling your delicate little straw headgear this ribbon came loose, and I was wretch enough to keep it to remember the incident by—and you."

"I absolve you from the charge I made. Really, I did not suspect you of being romantic. But you will throw the poor ribbon away now?"

"Will I? Not unless you replace it with one that is fresh. On the whole I think I prefer to keep this as a memento of our first meeting," he said boldly enough.

The young lady laughed—a little confusedly it must be admitted, and hastened to change the subject.

"Is it not time? See, our host is lighting lamps, and surely the half-hour has passed."

Thus recalled from sentiment to business Thaddeus closed his *vade mecum* with its assorted treasures and walking to the inn door looked out.

"Yes," he announced, "the shades of night are falling fast, as the Excelsior poet says, and already the palace is ablaze. If you are ready I am at your service. I cannot promise success, you understand, but as I am in good repute at court the chances are in our favor."

"There need be no delay on my part. I have long since determined upon this duty, and now that the hour is at hand I can only pray for success, and carry out my rôle."

Again, her determined air while thus speaking gave him a little uneasiness; but he would not let such a vague shadow trouble him now.

Together they left the tavern.

Hawkins fell in behind—evidently the English maid was under a vow never to let her mistress go far beyond her reach. Hawkins, while not a man-hater in general, had a comprehensive distrust of the male sex, and an intense devotion toward her mistress, around whom, in her estimation, the world revolved.

It was just evening.

Strange sights and sounds could be met with on the streets of Teheran; but Thaddeus had long since reached that point where familiarity with these things breeds contempt, and his companion seemed too much engrossed in her thoughts to heed them.

Thus they arrived at the palace gates.

Thaddeus had been here frequently, so that the grim guards knew him well.

Perhaps he exorcised some genii, and, with an "open sesame" hypnotized these same sentries; but Miss Sherwood failed to see him touch their hands with the coin of the realm.

They were now inside.

It was a revelation to an American woman, and she could not help but survey her surroundings with keen interest.

The palace of an Eastern potentate always appears gaudy to the cultivated eye, and yet the very gorgeousness of its hangings give an Oriental splendor that seems quite in keeping with all the rest.

Through these various rooms they were led to the reception apartment.

The presence of an unveiled foreign lady followed by a maid created some little excitement among the attendants.

After waiting a short time Thaddeus was ushered into the audience chamber alone.

He presently came out and when Mile. Chicago fastened her eager eyes upon his face with a burning glance she knew all was well.

"The shah will give me an audience?" she asked.

"At once. Please come with me. It is his usual custom when he sees a lady to order all his attendants from the room, so we will be alone with him."

What might have been a flash of satisfaction passed over her face, and was gone.

"I am ready, Captain Brown," she said, quietly enough, and Thaddeus could not detect a quiver to her voice.



So they passed in.

Thaddeus had already informed her that the shah spoke both French and English with considerable fluency, so that she needed no interpreter. His serene highness had learned a vast amount during his entertainment in Great Britain, and would have the same profound respect for the country that was plainly the mistress of the seas, even as his father, the late assassinated ruler, had before him.

Thaddeus observed the proper amount of reverence for his august majesty and yet would not bend the knee lower than might a true-born self-respecting Briton.

He introduced Mlle. Chicago under her real name, and with a few well-placed compliments.

The shah was pleased to meet her—he even extended his hand, perhaps, that she might kiss it, as Thaddeus realized with a shudder; but Nina had been brought up in free America where such things are unknown, and with true Yankee heartiness she seized the extended royal hand and shook it, much to his majesty's evident surprise and perhaps not a little to his secret amusement—at least it struck Thaddeus as a mighty clever way of bridging over a difficulty, and afforded him occasion for a hearty laugh quite frequently in the future.

With the courtesy of a gentleman, Thaddeus, having performed his duty of introduction, stepped back.

Whatever Nina might wish to say to his serene highness, it was evidently not in his province to listen.

Should she desire that he hear it, she must have already taken him into her confidence.

From where he stood he could hear her voice, though the words were not distinguishable. She seemed to be no longer calm—Thaddeus even imagined there was a pleading strain in her voice, which fact gave him considerable curiosity.

Had he done wrong to bring this American girl to the ruler of all Persia? So far as he himself were concerned, personally, he could have no regrets; but he trusted nothing might occur to injure the great cause he represented.

Inside the great palace the sounds from the streets did not penetrate.

The plashing of a merry fountain in some nearby court and the far away hum of music, perhaps proceeding from the king's harem, were all that came to the ears.

At every door, though out of sight, tall dark-faced janizaries stood, armed and ready to protect their lord and master against ill. The fate of the late shah was ever before the present ruler, and surely the head that wore the crown rested uneasily.

Thaddeus pitied the man who lived such a life,

royal in its way, yet lacking the freedom of the humblest subject of his kingdom.

While he stood there, absently examining the wonderful texture of the rich tapestry on the walls, and the pattern traced in the priceless Daghestan rug upon the floor, Brown suddenly received a fearful shock.

He heard Mlle. Chicago raise her voice, and words fall from her lips such as doubtless no Shah of Persia ever before listened to from a woman:

"I cannot take no for an answer, shah. You *must* grant my request. It means more than you dream—life and death are involved," was what the startled guardsman heard; and such words spoken to his serene highness were enough to make Thaddeus shudder for the safety of the daring girl who had thus bearded the lion in his den, the ruler of despotic Persia in his own palace.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW THE SHAH WAS BEWITCHED.

THE tinkling sound of barbaric music had ceased, and even the gurgling fountain seemed to have muffled its ceaseless chatter, so that Thaddeus was enabled to hear very distinctly.

He did not move—he could not move, for apparently he was transfixed with horror. To his credit be it announced that his fears were all for the girl whom he had introduced to the private audience chamber of his friend the shah. Thaddeus expected the monarch to clap his hands together, and at the signal to see the grim janizaries rush from behind the tapestries that concealed various secret doors. And then—he did not dare speculate upon what might happen; but if eunuch or soldier laid rude hands on that girl, the blood of an Englishman could never brook the insult, be the dread consequences what they might.

It was a moment of fearful suspense—a moment that must live in the memory of our genial guardsman for the balance of his life, and during which he realized that this bright girl from across the stormy Atlantic

had already taken hold upon his heart—at least she was much more than what an ordinary acquaintance might be.

Then the spell was broken.

His serene highness gave vent to a sound—not the signal clap which Thaddeus anticipated, and which must inaugurate anarchy on a small scale, with one Briton opposed to many dark featured guards—but a genuine, hearty laugh.

Evidently, instead of being offended, the shah, after recovering from his first surprise, felt inclined to regard this feminine summons to surrender as a huge joke. When a man has a plurality of wives, perhaps he learns something with regard to the sex; at least, how to succumb to such demands as may be made upon him. It is only the Western man with a single spouse who dares resist the law she lays down, only to usually find himself at last in a minority.

Yes, the shah laughed so heartily that he had to place his hands on his sides, and Thaddeus also grinned with secret pleasure, quite in the dark as he was with regard to the joke. No matter—it was usually easy to sneeze when his serene majesty took snuff.

Thaddeus had involuntarily pricked up his ears to catch what the answer should be, but ere speaking, the monarch beckoned to him.

"Come closer, Sahib Brown, and see how the ruler of an empire bows before the sway of beauty. This very interesting young woman of Shee-cago, which place I myself have heard much of, is seeking one, her beloved brother. Him she has followed to Japan, to Singapore, then India, and now my capital. She has heard that this young man is a prisoner here, and that he has a very good chance of dying because of being suspected as a conspirator against my life.

"That is a very serious affair. It was not on account of that I laughed, certainly. Never in all the history of glorious Persia has a shah been what you English are pleased to say 'held up' in his own palace, and by a woman. I have traveled and learned to appreciate your humor. It strikes me as very funny, and pardon me, I must again laugh."

Thaddeus keeps him company—indeed, his spirits feel as light as air since discovering that in all likelihood there will be no tragedy—thank heaven the shah has dined, and is feeling in a particularly good humor. Had Thaddeus been assisting in the demolition of a bottle of champagne he could not have experienced more exhilaration. The change from a condition of alarm and horror to one of relief was complete.

Mlle. Chicago evidently saw her advantage and did not intend to let it pass. It is policy to make hay

while the sun shines. She had enough Yankee blood for that business end of the situation.

"Then you will grant my petition, sire? You can appreciate the devotion that has taken me over oceans and continents in search of that headstrong brother. You will give me the order for my Robert's release—give it to me now," she said.

Thaddeus could not see how any man might harden his heart against such imploring—for his part, he stood ready to sacrifice anything and everything that his bachelor spirit held dear, even to his favorite pipe, if need be, should this charming creature demand it of him. But then, poor fellow, he was bewitched, you know.

To his surprise and chagrin the gracious ruler of Persia drew himself up and folding his arms, slowly shook his head, forced himself to look very serious.

"It is I fear, impossible," he said gravely.

"Nothing is impossible with your majesty," declared the young woman naïvely.

The shah was evidently pleased with her pretty compliment, but his dignity did not unbend.

"Then I should say, it is too late!" he remarked.

"Too—late! He was suspected of conspiring against your life! The penalty of that—oh, do not tell me he was put to death?" she cried.

The sudden agony in her voice appealed to the

shah, who suddenly put his hand upon the bright head of the girl as she sank on her knees before him.

"No, no, fear not, lady. He has only gone. When we investigated, it was found he was working *for* me, but he had made enemies in doing so, enemies in my own palace. I found that even the shah could not protect him and I sent him away under an escort of my best soldiers. He is now near the border, and will soon be in Europe. Besides, he was anxious to go—he had heard that the Greeks and Turks were actually at war."

At his kind words the girl's face was illumined with hope and joy.

Although it meant new journeying for her, the relief succeeding her recent fear was very welcome. Thaddeus could not understand it at all—he confessed himself very dull of comprehension, and wondered what could have sent this brother roaming over the face of the earth. Never having had any skeleton in his own family, he could not comprehend what misery and trouble such a thing must prove to the innocent members thereof.

Nor was he very curious about this same Robert and what he might have done. It was enough that the young chap was *her* brother, and that with the true devotion of a loving sister she was scouring the world in a search for him. Thaddeus could at least appre-



ciate this fully, and was in a humor to lend what assistance lay in his power.

Though he had considered himself more of a soldier than a philanthropist, he now believed it his solemn duty to aid this American cousin, even though in so doing he must sacrifice certain plans that had been carefully arranged.

Evidently Thaddeus was nearing that condition of beatitude wrought by self-abnegation, in which one may almost expect to feel the angelic wings begin to grow. At least, he was fast losing himself in the clutches of a wicked little god whose particular business it seems to be to destroy all peace of mind on the part of his worshippers.

Mlle. Chicago expressed her thanks warmly. Like most American women she was a creature of impulse, and when she spoke her words came direct from her heart.

The shah undoubtedly enjoyed this experience, for Nina Sherwood was quite a different girl from the inane beauties with whom he was accustomed to come in contact.

He assured her that when she chose to leave Teheran she, too, should have an escort of his faithful janizaries, for the country of late, ever since the violent death of his worshipful father in fact, had been overrun with desperate brigands, and one could hardly be safe,

whether in railroad train or caravan, without an armed guard.

This was very kind of the autocrat of Persia, and Thaddeus felt bound to add his thanks to those already uttered by his *protégé*.

Whereupon the shah looked at him with a peculiar smile upon his intelligent face and remarked:

"And you, too, will be leaving us about that time, Sahib Brown. Perhaps the same guard may do for both. We shall be sorry to lose you."

Of course Thaddeus had to turn a little red in the face, albeit he felt a peculiar pleasure in the region where his heart *used to be*, at having his company thus forced upon Mlle. Chicago.

"It shall be as you say, serene highness, since I am bound home by easy stages—nothing would delight me more than to be of some assistance to Miss Sherwood—that is providing she does not seriously object to my company," he said, with a rather forced laugh.

"Well, I'll see about it, sir. Already you have placed me under heavy obligations, and I really can imagine no way in which I may discharge the debt. Of course I realize that the circumstances surrounding us are peculiar, but I know you are a most honorable gentleman, and I have learned to be a very independent young woman while upon my father's cattle ranch. On the whole I am disposed to let his high-

ness have his way. Perhaps I may make life a little less miserable for you by exercising the spirit of Yankee cookery that has descended to me from my father's side, should we have to travel in a caravan such as brought me here. No doubt you have ere now grown weary of these strange, unaccustomed dishes with which Hindoo and Mohammedan delight to surprise us."

"You express my feelings in better words than I could have found in a year. I have longed for a good English dinner, eaten in a frosty air. But do you really mean to say *you* can cook?"

"If the opportunity arises you shall be the judge; although I beg that you consider the strange implements, with which a master of the craft would find it hard to execute his ordinary skill."

The shah joined in the conversation and for a short time they chatted sociably, after which the audience was at an end.

His majesty yawned, and Thaddeus, who had been given points in his early dealings with the shah, made haste to whisper to Mlle. Chicago. Thereupon they took their leave with renewed protestations on the part of the Persian ruler regarding their welfare.

It had been an eventful hour for Thaddeus, upon which his destiny must turn.

## CHAPTER V.

## RIVALS, OF COURSE.

For the time being the guardsman forgot all about Robert, and the peculiar conditions hedging that young man about.

His whole concern lay in the direction of arranging his own affairs, so that he might have a good excuse for shaking the dust of Teheran from his feet when Nina Sherwood turned her face toward the West.

And what was to hinder?

He had accomplished his task—General Skoubekoff had been fairly beaten at every turn, and was doubtless gnashing his teeth with ill-concealed anger over the discouraging result of his secret mission. The papers bearing on the case had started on their way to England, and barring accidents, must in due time reach the hands of her majesty's prime minister.

Really, he could leave Teheran with a clear conscience, and the feeling that he deserved a holiday.

One thing alone worried him.

This was the presence of Skoubekoff in the Persian capital.

If fortune would only be so kind as to call the Muscovite to St. Petersburg, Thaddeus might feel the last load taken from his heart; but in leaving him an undisputed field, he felt a trifle guilty. The snake might only be scotched, not killed, and still capable of doing much damage.

Perhaps some means might be devised which would accomplish this desired result.

That would do to sleep over. Thaddeus, being a plain, frank, honest sort of a Britisher, was not much given to laying schemes; but there be times in the affairs of most men when it seems necessary to arouse and take action in order to overcome the sea of troubles that threatens to overwhelm their plans. When the little god, Cupid, once makes his abiding place in a young man's heart, he develops some very peculiar traits, that might never have been suspected of lurking there.

There were complications to arise, however, such as Thaddeus did not dream could happen.

The old Russian general had been something of a beau in his day, as well as a famous diplomat. He rather prided himself on having gained the *sobriquet* of a "lady killer." In fact Skoubekoff, even with a white mustache was a dashing-looking figure, who had won many a joust in the tournament of love.

Such successes are apt to make a man vain, and por-

haps the older he grows the stronger this vanity has a hold upon him.

At least Skoubekoff awakened to the fact that the American girl was passably good-looking, and had a neat little dot of her own.

Englishmen were marrying rich American heiresses by the wholesale, and renovating their ancient castles with the "dollars of the daddies." Really, it was about time England's monopoly of that lucrative business were brought to an end, and her rival Russia stepped into the field. Whether it was this patriotic duty that influenced the old soldier, the belief that Mlle. Chicago had a healthy fortune back of her, or a genuine admiration for her pretty face, fine figure, and sparkling wit, may be set down as a problem unsolved. Possibly all of these things had their bearing upon him. At any rate he deliberately determined to sacrifice his bachelorhood and marry the heiress; which was as great a compliment as he could imagine, since he had steered clear of entangling alliances so many years.

It never entered the old fellow's head that he might run up against an obstacle in his designs, and that rock prove to be the same on which his ship of state had been wrecked—plain Thaddeus Brown, volunteer and tourist in general.

These two had not yet seen the last of each other,

and it seemed probable that the sparks would again fly when they came together like flint and steel.

Thaddeus was early astir the next day.

He had slept upon the question and evidently settled it to his satisfaction.

While the quaint Parsee band of musicians was greeting the rising of the sun-god with their really atrocious melodies, Thaddeus had set about carrying out his designs, which were to bear fruit later on. Perhaps he may have had a twinge of conscience about the manner in which such affairs had to be managed, but a man in love is able to find excuses for doing things, of which, at any other time, he would never be guilty—perhaps the desire for possession gradually blunts his faculties and conscience to a certain degree. Whatever the reason, the result has been evident in many an honest man's experience.

When the guardsman finally strolled back to the tavern, it was just in time for breakfast; and such was the keen state of his appetite after rising at an hour unusual to his ordinary principles, that he did full justice to the meal set before him. As the innkeeper was a native of France, the fare was much better than pilgrims to this far-off historical land had any reason to expect.

As yet Mlle. Chicago had not appeared.

Thaddeus hoped she was not ill, and kept a wary

eye out for Hawkins, intending to extract certain information from the trim maid.

It was almost noon when he finally found an opportunity to corner Polly. She confessed that her young mistress had been suffering with a severe headache, though now better—that she had never known Nina to be so afflicted before, and supposed it could be laid at the door of meeting royalty. Thaddeus sent his sympathy, and trusted he would see Miss Sherwood by evening, when they could arrange their plans for leaving Teheran.

He felt a little exultant sensation at the very idea of being permitted to journey in her society, to be her chevalier as it were.

Knowing how potential such an aid as Polly might be, and really liking the cockney maid, he was clever enough to treat her in a most friendly manner, and rested under the belief that he had a warm ally in Hawkins, who would deign to advance his cause should the opportunity arise.

The afternoon dragged along.

Really, Thaddeus had never known time to pass on such leaden wings, and more than once he took himself to task for making such a donkey out of an honest bachelor guardsman.

It was all of no avail.

The seed was sown and had begun to germinate, so



that even his own taunts or sneers could not prevent its growth.

Of course in the end he would have to give the battle over and confess himself beaten—they all do in this unequal fight with the little god of love, since human nature is handicapped with a heart in the start.

He found himself rejoicing in the approach of evening, not because he was hungry and the dining hour near at hand, but simply on account of the opportunity it would give him of seeing Mlle. Chicago.

And Thaddeus did have the pleasure of dining with the American girl.

Over the table they entered into a discussion of their future plans for following Robert—strange how much interest Thaddeus already took in this wandering brother, about whom he knew so little. The youngster's patriotic desire to enlist in the cause of Greece against the invading Turkish hordes also aroused his admiration, for his own feelings were already enlisted in that direction.

Once the guardsman experienced a cold chill.

Chancing to glance around, he discovered the Russian general at the other end of the room, and realized that it was the diplomat's basilisk stare that had made him so uneasy.

Hitherto Thaddeus had experienced sneers and frowns from this quarter; but now he discovered

something devilish in the malign glare which Skoubekoff bent upon him.

And even if the Britisher was fond of declaring himself a little obtuse when compared with the quick-witted cousin from across the Atlantic, he grasped the situation readily enough now.

"Confusion! the Russian is my rival in love as well as in diplomacy," was the startling conviction that forced itself into his mind.

At first he was amused at the idea of having a rival twice his age. Then, as he recollected the fame of the old soldier for his stubborn qualities as a fighter, he became a little uneasy.

Skoubekoff was a man of commanding presence, and his wife would be honorably received at the court of the White Czar. Still, somehow, Thaddeus' uneasiness did not seem to spring from any fear lest Nina should prefer the Russian, but rather on account of the fact that the diplomat was as unscrupulous as he was cunning and powerful, and in this wild country it seemed possible for such a man, urged on by defeat in diplomacy and love, to spring sudden traps upon those against whom he conspired.

Perhaps it was a shadow which coming events cast before, that sent a cold chill to Thaddeus' heart as he saw the general, still frowning savagely, leave the room. This feeling quickly passed and his natural

cheerful spirits returned. Had he not taken the bull by the horns once and downed him? In the game of love as well as in that of diplomacy, he would again be the old general's undoing, please heaven!

## CHAPTER VI.

### ENTER—THE O'SHAUGHNESSY.

THE astute Russian had ere now found his suspicions aroused, for it chanced that he was not far away at the time Thaddeus conversed with the dapper maid of Mlle. Chicago, and, in his mind, such confidences could have but one meaning.

It was bad enough to lose the game which concerned the tremendous national issues hovering around the Gates of India, and the anticipated discontent among those erstwhile valiant defenders of the Khyber Pass, the Afridas—now the matter became a personal one.

Skoubekoff had on many occasions proven his valor on hotly disputed battlefields, for which all honor might be given—he had led his Cossacks in the maddest charge at Plevna, and been personally decorated for unusual gallantry by his royal master, the Czar Alexander.

And yet Skoubekoff could also descend to tricky methods in order to further his cause.

Perhaps it was this fact that had made him such a valuable man in conducting negotiations with Eastern potentates.

If our Thaddeus was foolish enough to believe the game as good as won because, forsooth, the first round had been declared in his favor, he certainly counted without his host; for this fighting Muscovite was not built that way, and possessed many of the bulldog tactics of holding on to the death that have always distinguished Brown's own race of Britons.

If one scheme failed to work there were others. This namby-pamby guardsman volunteer, this toy soldier who as yet had never been baptized in the smoke and flame of fierce battle, should be taught a lesson, and curse the day when his bold spirit ran counter to that of one who had been leading warriors into the jaws of death, when he, Thaddeus, was in pinafores.

True, the Englishman had been singularly fortunate in receiving written assurances of allegiance and continued friendship for Great Britain from the Ameer of Afghanistan and the new ruler of Persia.

That was where the shoe pinched; but it was not to be expected that a man like Skoubekoff would admit anything like superiority in his rival. Circumstances had favored Thaddeus—the time was not yet ripe for Russia's mailed hand to be felt at the back door of India—a new ruler would some day arise in one of

these countries, favorable to the czar, and then the long delayed onset must occur.

Russia could afford to wait, meantime conducting a creeping forward policy, fashioned very much after that of the sly cat advancing upon the bird intended for its dinner.

So Skoubekoff put national issues aside, and prepared to advance his own personal aims.

And when this veteran campaigner bent his energies toward one particular field he was apt to keep the wires hot and make things hum.

If Thaddeus won out he would deserve all he gained.

Skoubekoff was one of those nervy fellows who never let the grass grow under their feet.

He had made a study of the case while the young people talked and laughed at dinner.

No doctor ever diagnosed more keenly than this soldier, who, in his day, had given field surgeons plenty of work to do.

The result of this analysis was that when he quitted the dining room of M. Prevost's French tavern, it had been already settled in his mind that man, to man, he had not the ghost of a show beside the guardsman.

Skoubekoff knew the signs only too well—he understood in the beginning how deeply in love Thaddeus must be, and now he had, to his disgust, discovered the

omens of an answering affection upon the fair countenance of Mlle. Chicago.

Well, since an honest competition was out of the question, the diplomat would adopt other means.

This British boor must learn that he played with fire when opposing such a strategist.

Inside of twelve hours the boot would be upon the other leg—this charming damsel from across the sea, where fortunes grew like weeds, would look upon the manly soldier as her savior, a hero of heroes, and madly worship him for his gallantry, while her feeling toward the Britisher would have also cooled *amazingly*.

Oh! yes, Skoubekoff could devise a neat little game, the shrewdest of the shrewd, whereby with one wave of the magician's wand the guardsman's *Chateaux d'Espagne* would be tumbled in ruins, and the *débris* serve as a foundation upon which his own goodly castle would be reared.

Perhaps never disgruntled lover schemed with more desperate cunning than Skoubekoff.

His capacity for such things would surely have made him famous in the days of chivalry, when deeds of valor and prowess in the tournament won the favor of the fair sex, as well as knight-errant trickery.

For Skoubekoff arranged it so that he might in the eyes of the woman he loved, appear to be the most valiant man on earth; and when Nina, who, like most

American girls, had a natural admiration for manly qualities in the opposite sex, looked upon the amazing efforts he made in her behalf, how could she fail to adore him?

It had worked with success before.

Old birds may not be caught with chaff, but the general had yet to discover the woman, young or aged, for whom he was not more than a match when it came to a question of wits.

Wherefore it came to pass that though plans were arranged for an early start from Teheran, there was yet an experience in store for Mlle. Chicago ere she saw the last of Persia's capital.

It is strange how the flotsam and jetsam of human nature may be found in every remote quarter of the world. Go where you will, in Yokohama, Hong Kong, Dawson City, Alaska, the wilds of Central America, the pampas of Argentina as well as the steppes of Siberia, in the tangle of African forests and Indian jungles, even at Benim, Timbuctoo, Fez, and the Mahdi's headquarters at Omdurman, where the Khar-toum Gordon defended stood, or it might be the remote and inaccessible capital of the warlike Abyssinians, still the man who claims old Erin for his birthplace may be run across, his rich brogue marking him as one whom paint and even war feathers can never disguise.



He was there in Teheran.

Thaddeus made his acquaintance in a remarkably strange manner, nor was he likely to forget the circumstance in time to come.

It was late on this night, the last he expected to spend in the shah's capital, and having made all arrangements with regard to leaving in the morning, the guardsman debated as to whether he should seek his rather uncomfortable cot, or remain up long enough to smoke another Persian cigar.

Had the bed been more inviting, perchance it would have won the day, which must have always after been a matter of keen regret.

The cigar held out the better inducements, however, and so he struck a light.

That was where fate stepped in and served him the kindest deal of his life. Thaddeus would have good reason to emblazon the weed upon his coat-of-arms after this night. He would likewise shudder when he remembered what a grand opportunity must have passed him by, had the blandishments of his couch proven paramount to those inducements which tobacco held forth.

Which scores one good point for the wretched weed, so derided by those to whom it is a bane.

Thaddeus having settled this important question by applying fire to the end of his long cigar, fashioned

doubtless for export, since the natives all stick to their water pipes, was puffing away upon the piazza of the tavern, when he noticed a fellow loitering near by and apparently engaged in watching him.

This brought to mind the Russian.

Could it be that Skoubekoff had set a spy on him to ascertain his intentions? He would not put it past him at all.

It was a lucky thing Thaddeus made it a rule to go armed—that, as a soldier engaged in serious diplomatic business for his government, he believed it his duty never to be caught without some means of defense against foes.

This fact gave him considerable satisfaction now, and when his hand carelessly touched the hard rubber butt of the little six-shooter reposing so snugly in his pocket, he felt renewed confidence in his ability to grapple with any new difficulty Dame Fortune might send.

Just then his interest in the stranger increased, for the other made a gesture.

Plainly he wished the guardsman to approach. Perhaps it was reckless for him to do so, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, but some men give so little heed to danger that they escape many evils likely to overwhelm others more cautious.

Thaddeus never even debated the question.

Perhaps he allowed his hand to drop where it could readily fall upon the defender of his faith, and still holding the abominable yet blessed Persian cigar between his teeth, he walked directly toward the skulking figure.

The man appeared anxious to keep in the shadow, and this alone must have excited suspicion in the mind of one given to plots; yet it did not keep Thaddeus from advancing directly up to him.

He saw a figure that at another time must have excited his laughter—a figure dressed in a most remarkable uniform, neither Persian, Turkish, nor Afghan, yet partaking of all three and presenting a loud and ludicrous appearance.

This wonderfully garbed man, who could not be less than the captain of the shah's bodyguard, Grand Sachem of the Imperial Order or some such High Pandrum, made a dramatic gesture as Thaddeus drew up with the true abruptness of a guardsman.

It was undoubtedly intended for a soldier's salute to his superior. What could he do but return it?

"Sir, do you desire to see me?" he ventured, hardly knowing whether to address the gorgeous officer in Hindoo, French or English.

To his amazement the answer came in a tongue that could never be mistaken.

"Bedad and it's the pleasure of me life to mate ye

again, captain, dear. Niver wor I afther expectin' such a run av look. Bliss yer swate life it's me that's afther belaving ye fail to recoognize me in this picturesque and charming attire."

"I doubt whether your own mother would know you in such a remarkable garb, my good man. The only thing I can swear to is that you are a sure enough son of Erin."

"Wirra, I wonder how yer honor could guess that? But, let it pass—sure, it's av shmall consequence anyhow, and I've matters av big importance to consult ye about."

"Ah! now I know you—no other man ever used that expression but my good Rory O'Shaughnessy."

"As always at yer service, captain, dear."

"Give me your hand. I am more than delighted to meet you away off here; and evidently in the service of my friend, the shah. How comes it I have not run across you during the last three weeks? I have visited the palace almost daily?"

"Och! it was away on a very important piece av business I was, on me honor. And it's a great sthroke av luck to ye, captain, that I kim back whin I did, for had I delayed another day, or taken the nixt caravan, I'm afraid it would have been all over wid yer coort-in', so I am."

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE GREATEST THING ON EARTH.

THE declaration of the Irishman was so positive and his vehemence so manifest that Thaddeus could not be otherwise than startled.

"What do you mean?" he demanded sternly, possibly suspecting that the Irish soldier of fortune had been prying into matters which were no concern of his, and with regard to which the guardsman might be very loath to take advice.

"Joost what I say, troth, that it's a joyful thing for ye Rory O'Shaughnessy happened on deck, else, be the powers, whin mornin' kim ye'd have no betther than a ghost av a show."

"Show—with what, with whom?"

"The young liddy, to be sure."

"O'Shaughnessy, do you mean Miss Sherwood?" asked Thaddeus, his interest increasing in jumps as he realized there was some motive back of this concern manifested by the Irishman.

"Mlle. Sheecago as the Frenchman calls her."

"Well, you have succeeded in arousing my curiosity, if such was your aim. Now, like a good fellow, tell me what you mean—why should my friendly relations with this charming young lady be interrupted—who would be so cruel?"

"Who indade but Skoube?"

"You mean the illustrious general?"

"I mane the bog-throttin' Rooshan, the thafe in the night, bad cess to him, that manes to stale the fairest land under the sun. Your own father fought thim at Sevastopol—but let it pass; sure, it's av shmall consequence to us anyhow in this day. That is the blaggard, captain dear, and it is *him* that manes to forestall ye in the race. Since he niver could win in a fair game he descinds to trickery, and whin it comes till that I'm ready to back the Rooshan agin the world."

It was evident to Thaddeus that this strange but warm-hearted old comrade knew something of importance—something that he should learn without more than necessary delay.

"Tell me what is in the wind, Rory, and do as little beating around the bush as possible, I beg of you, by the memory of our old associations."

He could not have appealed to a stronger sentiment. Rory looked back to his London days when he served under Captain Thaddeus Brown as the happiest of his adventurous life.

"Bedad and I will that. You must make up your moind to be astonished—in fact to be almost petrified so to spake, captain dear."

"Oh! I must—well, forewarned is forearmed, they say. Is it then so very strange a tale?"

"Whist! ye never *dramed* av one half so quare. It do bate all the experience I ever had. I've helped in more than a few games to win a swate girlee's heart, bedad, but niver one like this. The Rooshan has a long head and a longer pocketbook, bogob, whin he can hire an army to plase a whim."

"An army, do you say?" cried Thad, aghast, thinking of his one lone six-shooter.

"A dozen at the laste, and ivery wan av thim the hardest headed knave in the service av the shah. Sure I know thim, so I do, since they have sarved under me own eye, and fit loike ryal Bengal tigers when it kim till a scrimmage."

"Well, a dozen is not so bad. I might manage half of them, and that would only leave six to dispose of in some other way."

Rory looked at his former captain in the sublime light of admiration.

"Begob, who but a British soldier wud be afther spakin' so lightly av the danger. However, av the thing be worked properly, there nade be no blood spilt at all at all in this game."

"Be so good as to explain. How am I to mesmerize a dozen rough fellows so that I may twist their schemes to suit my will?" demanded the perplexed soldier.

"That's jist the pint—sure ye're to mesmerize the ugly bog-throtters, and me among 'em. Whirra! but I assure yer honor it will be the strangest thing yer eyes ever rested on."

"Very good. You have succeeded in arousing my curiosity; now satisfy it. What remarkable feat are these Falstaff soldiers about to undertake?"

"To spake plainly, sor, they mane to bate the divil himself—to chate old Death at his own game, and to hurry along the resurrection day," said the Irishman soberly and solemnly.

Rory gave no indications of being half-seas over, and the guardsman after looking keenly at him, eagerly awaited further particulars.

"Time is valuable, sor, and so I'll spake me little piece in a nutshell, so I will. Moind that ye don't think me crack-brained at all. It's the Gospel truth I'm tellin' this night.

"D'ye see, the Rooshan has hired the gang av us to do his dhirty work. Bad cess to him, the injucement was so strong it almost overcame me natural prejudice. This is how it was—I knowed full well av I refused he would be afther securing another captain av the Ryal Guard. Besides, whin I heard that ye war in the



mess I belaved it would be in me power to assist yees."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, Rory, my boy. I know your warm heart of old."

"And there war the purty colleen—be jabers, I couldn't think av her fallin' into the clutches av that ould divil widout indeavorin' to save the swate girlee.

"The purty plan thin is loike this: we were hired to kidnap this young woman. At a time arranged his honor, the ould cock, manes to show up. Av coorse there will be the divil's own time. The Rooshan against the whole gang. Wid a pistol in each hand he will dash in among us. Then the hair will fly. Musha! but it will be a sight for the gods av war. Niver was there sich a hero. At ivery shot two men drap. He bears a charmed loife, so he do, and the bullets appear to flatten against his garments like paper.

"Captain dear, when the little battle is over would ye belave it ivery mother's son av us lies there apparently as dead as Julius Caesar.

"And the swate colleen has been a witness av the most daring rescue on record. Tell me, could any young woman see a gallant man bate ould Hercules himself in her behalf, and not fall dead in love wid the hero?

"The ginerall will snatch her up in his arms, mount

a horse and gallop away. Whin in the distance we hear a single shot it will be toime fer the dead to come back to loife, and ivery man on the ground will sit up to drink a drap till the success av the bould Rooshan's wooing."

Rory halted for lack of breath.

As for Thaddeus, he found himself almost paralyzed with astonishment and incredulity.

The startling nature of the cunning plan concocted by the Muscovite to supplant him in the affections of the young American heiress was quite enough to take his breath away.

"Can it be possible such a rascally thing could be attempted in this latter part of the nineteenth century?" he finally exclaimed.

Then Rory laughed—he was never out of humor, this rollicking broth of a boy, and could give the best of men points on how to enjoy life.

"Faith, men are purty much the same to-day as they wor hundreds av years ago. I've often considered the subject and made up me moind human nature changes very little in sphite av oivilization. Dape down in the heart—but let it pass, sure, it's of shmall consequence anyhow, and we have other matters before the house. Av coorse it goes widout saying that ye are opposed to the bloody Rooshan carrying out his nate little schame?"

Thaddeus aroused himself, throwing off the paralysis that threatened to bind him fast.

He remembered that after all, this miserable game was yet in embryo—fortune, which had always been so kind to him was once more favoring his cause, in thus giving him warning.

With the assistance of the worthy O'Shaughnessy he might again baffle the fighting Russian.

Thus Thaddeus became himself again, eager to continue his chastisement of Skoubekoff. In personal matters as well as those political he would like to prove himself the superior of this veteran who had graduated in the courts of diplomatic Europe.

"That would be quite an unnecessary question, Rory. I could not sit by and see such an estimable young lady caught in a spider's web; no, not if I were compelled to put out my hands and choke the old spider."

"It do make me heart burn wid satisfaction, captain dear, to hear ye spake such noble sintiments. And be the powers, d'ye moind, I have decided that the honor and glory av the schame shall fall till your share. In a wurrd, ye'll euchre the ould chap out av his game."

"But I don't aspire to that. All I want is to save Miss Nina the inconvenience and terror that would naturally follow such an experience."

"Begorra, I'm afraid it be too late for that, sor."

"Too late, Rory—too late?"

"Sure, sor, the swate colleen is already a prisoner in the hands av me noble guard."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## IT WAS A GLORIOUS VICTORY.

ALTHOUGH staggered by the information vouchsafed by the Irish adventurer, Thaddeus did not allow himself to show any weakness.

His nature was that of the average Anglo-Saxon, a little slow in getting aroused, but once fully waked up, almost irresistible.

It was evident that matters had been carried with a high hand.

They had gone much further than he thought, and Thaddeus realized that in a great measure he must depend on the natural sagacity of the O'Shaughnessy in order to win out.

Those who leaned on Rory did not trust to a broken reed.

"Tell me what has been done?" asked the soldier, with something of his old authority.

"We have secured the girlee. No harm can befall her, that I am sure, since it would be death by the hales for the divil that dishobeyed *me*. Ye'd raily be

surprised to know the authority I have over these Ryal Bodyguards. Wun wink av me eye wud mane the bastinado, and sure av I winked twice the poor divil wud be hangin' fate down from the bridge."

"But—while you are here, may not the Russian carry out his share of the vile scheme, and gain his object?"

"Make yer moind aisy on that subject, captain dear. The toime hasn't come by more than an hour yet, nearer two in fact."

"Good. I begin to see hope. I may yet get an audience with the shah, and under his orders lead a troop to the rescue."

"No doubt that would work natelly, and I think Rory O'Shaughnessy's head would make a brave showing on yonder pole in the marnin'," said the other dryly.

"What do you mean?"

"Bedad, ye'd have to explain that the villains wor his serene highness' own bodyguard, wid Rory at their head. They niver ask a man be he guilty or not in this blissed country. Shmall chance I'd be afther havin' to count me beads."

"I see—that would never do at all. Your connection with this business must not be disclosed. Perhaps you can help me out, my friend?"

"Well, now, thot is why I am here, sure. It's me intention that ye forestall the Rooshan."

"Yes."

"And rescue the colleen bawn yersilf be the power av yer good arm."

"Excellent—go on."

"And win her heart in the bargain, if so be ye haven't done so already, bedad."

"Very good, Rory, my man. For one, I'm perfectly willing, but must confess I am quite in the dark as to how it shall be done."

"That it must be me pleasure to explain. You shall be the god av war, and shoot down the whole blissed twelve men av us this night."

"Yes, but your braves have seen the general?"

"Thru for ye, sor."

"And doubtless they would decline to die for any other party than the man whose ducats they jingled so merrily in their pockets."

"Ivery man av them has tin toman, wid a promise av as many more if they die gracefully. Bedad, the whole schame has been practiced, and ye'll see some av the most remarrkable death struggles in the worrid. But let it pass—sure, it's of shmall consequence anyhow. The pint ye have made is worthy av consideration. I thought av it at the start, and belave I've formed a nate little schame to desave the omadhauns."

"Let's hear it."

"Ye must represent the ould fox."

“Meaning Skoubekoff—how can I do it?”

“Sure, lave it till me. I can whiten your hair and mustache, give the ends av thot the fierce military twirl, and rig ye out to look like a twin brother av the Rooshan, seen by the light av a fire. Thin, when ye make the grand assault, be sure and shoot over the heads av the byes, for if there’s blood spilt I couldn’t answer for the consequences.”

“Rory, your hand. This is the wildest scheme I ever heard of, and better fitted for the days of the Crusades than now. But we are in a country where the strangest things pass muster, and this Russian is well fitted for such intrigues. Never fear, if you give me a chance I will carry out my part of the contract to the letter.”

“Take this second revolver, captain dear—ye’ll nade thim both, and here is more provender for the barkers. In case ye are pursued, shoot to kill, for then it would mane business. Now av ye are ready, come wid me.”

Thaddeus tossed his cigar aside and never flinched or hesitated, but immediately accompanied the Celt. He pinched himself several times to ascertain whether he could be awake or dreaming, for surely no man ever passed through a more remarkable phantasy when locked in the arms of Morpheus than this experience.

It presented a ludicrous aspect as well as a serious



side, and Thaddeus hardly knew whether to laugh or look at it in a practical business-like manner.

Rory O'Shaughnessy knew every foot of the Persian capital, it seemed, and he was not long in leading Thaddeus to a shelter that was evidently his own, to judge from the paraphernalia scattered about with an Irishman's usual lack of order, and the heavy odor of stale tobacco smoke with which the place was permeated.

Here he set about transforming the guardsman into a fair copy of the pompous Russian.

His success was really gratifying.

When Thaddeus looked into a cracked glass he felt bound to declare Rory must be a wizard, for really it seemed to be Skoubekoff's soldierly features at which he gazed. Then his mentor coached him with respect to certain movements and actions, and even had him roar like a bull once or twice.

This last effort he pronounced splendid, and well worthy of the veteran military man.

That roar would accomplish wonders—the walls of Jericho must have fallen before it even as they did at the blast of the ram's horns.

All being now ready for the Nineteenth Century crusade, the modern Don Quixote was led forth by his faithful squire, Sancho Panza.

There was but one thing needed, a horse.

Rory would supply this—indeed, he already had one in his mind's eye, for what would the famous Knight of La Mancha be without his faithful Rosy?

Finally they were on the road.

The walls of Teheran had been placed behind and they headed toward the old ruins where Rory had left his men in charge of the captive.

Thaddeus had much difficulty in realizing that all this was not a fevered dream—it seemed the height of absurdity; and yet, if Nina Sherwood had thus been made the sport of chance, and now suffered the pangs of a prisoner held for ransom, he could do nothing save allow himself to be carried on by the tide that bore his fortunes toward the flood.

There was almost an hour to spare before the time set for the Russian's appearance, and the slaughter of the innocents.

It was well.

Rory desired to have the affair over with and Miss Sherwood safe in Teheran before the real Skoubekoff turned up.

Perhaps the amazed guards might decline to die a second time, and trouble ensue.

After giving Thaddeus a few parting directions the Great Mogul of the shah's bodyguard left him, and entered the camp among the ruins.

Thaddeus could see it all from where he sat upon

his horse, and imagined he was able to detect the figure of the captive American girl.

As he strained his eyes in the endeavor to make sure of this point, he realized from the thumping of his heart how very dear Nina Sherwood was already becoming to him. Affection that might awaken slowly under ordinary conditions is aroused in leaps and bounds when the fountains of romance are stirred.

A few minutes passed.

Then came a cough from the camp.

It was Rory's signal to begin the startling drama, the like of which could never be seen outside of Buffalo Bill's Wild West, where Indians are sacrificed daily, and even give up the ghost twice per diem on rare occasions.

Thaddeus calmly dismounted and led his horse closer to the camp, fastening the animal to a tree, for while the distance to Teheran was not much more than a mile, he did care to have to walk it with his *protégé*.

This done, he drew out a revolver with either hand, and assuming the pompous air of the old Russian strode into the camp.

As his first bellow sounded, every man was on his feet, and the voice of Rory could be heard calling in the Persian tongue to his men, telling them to die in the last ditch rather than surrender.

It was a great scene.

The like of it most certainly had never been seen before and might not occur again! Shades of olden knights and worthies must have viewed with unbounded admiration this one valiant warrior rushing to the fray against a dozen foes. What hero-worshipping woman could have beheld such an exhibition of nerve and daring in her own individual behalf, without secretly setting up the valorous god on a pedestal in her heart?

Thaddeus had entered fully into the spirit of the thing, once he started.

His roars would have surprised even the genuine Skoubekoff himself, who might have turned green with envy before this big-lunged Briton.

And he banged away, right and left, with his revolvers, in a way only to be excelled by some frolicsome Western cowboy on a bender.

Never man shot as Thaddeus—if he aimed at a star, twinkling high above the ruined walls, there dropped a fierce Persian warrior, sprawling upon the earth in the agonies of death—his bullets must indeed be charmed. All around him they fell. The roar of battle was in the air, but through it all that one figure passed unscathed as though invulnerable.

Perhaps it lasted one full minute, and then the field of carnage was won—men lay around like logs, some

kicking their last, like decapitated chickens, others groaning dismally, at the point of death, but the only figure erect was the supposed Russian hero, Skoubekoff.

## CHAPTER IX.

## NINA HEARS THE STRANGEST STORY EVER TOLD.

THADDEUS drew a deep breath.

As a guardsman it had long been his ambition to figure in scenes of adventure and strife, to scent the smoke of battle and lead his men in a gallant charge against the enemies of his queen, but he had never in his wildest dreams contemplated having a share in such a remarkable tragedy-comedy as this.

A dozen men had fallen beneath his terrible fire—really, the scene of carnage as viewed by the light of the fire was such as probably no man had ever before beheld.

And yet this modern admirable Crichton really felt ashamed of his share in the work.

There was only one thing left for him to do, and this was, to carry Miss Sherwood away, following out the line of the iniquitous general's plan.

He had partly reloaded one of his revolvers in order to be ready for an emergency—this was a precaution which as sportsman and soldier he had long since learned.

Then he advanced toward the spot where the young woman stood.

Nina had been a witness to this amazing scene. Some girls would have fainted with horror, while others might have shrieked aloud with terror.

Mlle. Chicago did neither. She seemed to possess unusual nerve for a girl, and while very white in the face she had watched the panorama as though fascinated.

And really it was remarkable enough to fascinate any one.

When the seeming old general ran up, he found her calmly awaiting his coming. A glance at her face astonished Thaddeus, for he felt sure he could detect scorn written there.

It was no time for explanations—they could be indulged in later on. Minutes were precious now, since some of the defunct warriors might grow impatient for the sounding of Gabriel's resurrection trump, and come back to this vale of tears a little too previously for the success of the wonderful plan; or, possibly, the genuine heroic Skoubekoff might arrive on the scene ahead of time, which would be apt to complicate matters.

"Come with me, Miss Sherwood. I have a horse near by. You will soon be safe in Teheran," he said quickly, as he reached her side.

"I am ready to go with you, sir," was the reply she made, and Thaddeus was amazed to detect so little trembling in her voice.

"God bless her," he thought at the moment, filled with love and pride, "she is a brave girl and would make a soldier the right kind of wife."

It seemed very likely that *some* soldier, either Russian or British, might get her.

He took hold of her arm to lead her across the scene of carnage, where men lay thick as fallen leaves in autumn.

There was no shuddering, no half-suppressed exclamations of horror—instead, the brave American girl seemed to look around her in wonder. Could she suspect something of the truth? Thaddeus shivered at the thought of feeling her contempt. He must clear his own skirts at least, and in that moment he had decided upon the method to be employed in order to substantiate his word.

They reached the horse.

"Let me assist you?" he said eagerly, but almost before he knew what she was about Nina had made use of a dangling Persian stirrup and with an agile spring seated herself upon the croup—her experience on a Texan cattle ranch had taught her how to do this superbly.

There was nothing left for the rather disconcerted



guardsman to do but loosen the horse's bridle and gain his own seat in the saddle, which feat he accomplished rather clumsily under the circumstances.

Thus they left the ruins with the heaps of motionless figures.

Thaddeus hardly knew whether to laugh or feel ashamed—the farce was so extremely broad, and yet, remembering what Miss Sherwood's agony of mind must have been, the whole scheme seemed so very contemptible that he detested himself for even having this share in it.

Somehow he was reminded of pictures he had seen of colonial times in New England, where the sturdy pioneer pilgrim fathers rode armed to church, ever on the watch for Indian foes, and with the good wife mounted behind them.

After going a short distance he halted the horse and faced toward the ruins again.

The fire was blazing and the camp could be plainly seen.

"Watch the effect of my signal shot, Miss Sherwood, and do not be surprised at anything," he said.

Then throwing up his hand he fired a shot, meanwhile holding the horse tightly lest the animal attempt any antics.

Their eyes were bent on the camp in the ruins of the old palace.

A more than passing strange scene was taking place there, and one that must have startled an unprepared observer.

No sooner had the signal sounded than a dozen heads were raised—then as many dead men began to clamber to their feet, with many a joke and laugh, stretching their arms, and not a few even pledging the success of their scheme from various leather bottles of Persian liquor, with which they seemed to be plentifully provided.

Mlle. Chicago said not a word, surprised though she must certainly have been.

As for Thaddeus, having witnessed the resurrection—a spectacle few mortals have ever enjoyed—he again turned his horse and walked the animal away from the grove.

The road was near at hand, its white dust serving as a guide, and presently they were heading in the direction of the Persian capital.

Not until then did Thaddeus break the silence, though fairly itching to clear himself of any complicity in this diabolical scheme.

“You were astonished to see the dead come back to life, Miss Nina?” he said.

“Well, I had a pretty good idea they were not as dead as they made out. Down in Texas I have always been given to understand that when a man wishes to

shoot down another pilgrim he is in the habit of aiming his weapon directly at him, and not picking out the heavenly bodies for targets," she replied with some scorn in her voice.

At this Thaddeus burst into a laugh.

"You saw me do that—I am glad of it, glad that your surprise at seeing apparently dead men come back to life does not overwhelm you."

"My surprise in that respect does not compare with what I feel in regard to another thing."

There was a ring of sadness in her tone that, strange to say, quite tickled the man.

Then she really cared, and grieved to know he could have a hand in this plot against her peace and liberty.

"Oh! you have seen through my disguise then, Miss Nina? Well, I am not at home in this business of personating other people. Such a masquerading deserves an ample explanation, and you shall speedily hear all that I know. I am too much concerned, too indignant over such an outrage to desire secrecy. All I can say is that I trust the opportunity will arise when I can take satisfaction out of the scoundrel who is the cause of your being subjected to such inconvenience."

His words and manner were so frank that Nina recovered much of the faith she had previously felt in him.

She prepared, a trifle incredulously it must be confessed, and reasonably so, to hear a strange narrative; nor was she disappointed, since the story Thaddeus told in his blunt way was quite as remarkable as one of Baron Munchausen's tales.

"I desire to take no credit to myself, Miss Sherwood. I am only anxious to have you acquit me of all share in this ridiculous scheme to win your regard. I have done nothing but imitate the vainglorious old hero of Plevna, who disgraces the fame he won on former battlefields by this dastardly attempt to win by fraud what I am free to believe he never could have done otherwise. Those fellows fell like logs, so that it was a bloodless victory. All I am thankful for is that *you* are safe, and I am anxious to hear you acquit me in full. Could I have done anything else under just those circumstances and have retained a place in your estimation?"

They were nearing the walls of Teheran when Thaddeus finished his recital.

He waited with some little apprehension to hear her answer.

"I cannot see that there was any other way by which you could have attained your end without a desperate fight. Yes, you were wise to act as you did, Mr. Thaddeus. I have met with a few adventures in my travels, but never anything to compare with this. They

say anything is fair in love and war, and perhaps I should be lenient with the poor old general, whose heart has been so punctured it seems; but somehow I have a contempt for a man who, in these enlightened days, would subject one for whom he pretended to have a sincere affection to terror and danger forsooth, in order that he might pose as a god or a great hero. Still, I am inclined to be merciful toward one whose record for bravery in the past is so glorious, and in charity draw the conclusion that our valiant Skoubekoff has grown perilously near his dotage."

At which Thaddeus chuckled immensely, for the remark proved conclusively that Nina could never, never, under any conditions, consider the Russian's claim upon her heart. There is no room in a woman's heart for both love and contempt at the same time.

Poor Skoubekoff—he had overreached himself, and been outgeneraled—fate was a more desperate enemy to run up against than the bristling fortifications of the Turks at Plevna.

And the end was not yet.

Truth to tell, the game had hardly more than begun, since this romantic episode in Teheran simply opened the ball.

Thus conversing confidentially Thaddeus and his charmer reached the gate of the city.

In most of these Oriental cities the city gates are

closed at sundown, not to be opened to prince or peasant until morning.

This custom originated centuries back when some hostile army gained access to a fortified city under cover of darkness and friendly gates.

In places like Fez and many Arabian towns, as well as those along the Afghan border the rule is rigidly enforced to-day; but Teheran must be an exception, or else her guards are very lax in their duties, for one may enter or leave the city at night with only a judicious "palming" of a *toman*, equal to about three American dollars. A *toman* will accomplish wonderful things in the land of the shah.

Once inside the city Thaddeus let the horse go, and with unerring instinct led Mlle. Chicago to the tavern.

He was on his way to the room of Rory O'Shaughnessy to change his assumed garb and appear once more as an honest British subject, when, upon turning a corner of a lonely street, and directly under a quaint lamp that was fastened to a house, he came face to face with his double, Skoubekoff.

It was indeed a striking tableau!

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CLOSING OF THE FIRST ROUND.

SKOUBEKOFF stopped short as though paralyzed.

So did Thaddeus.

The Russian could hardly believe his eyes—he doubtless fancied himself haunted by his own specter.

Thaddeus saw him raise his hand to his head as though to clear his vision, and seized with a sudden inspiration the guardsman did the same. Then Skoubekoff made another move as might a tragedian on the stage in crying “avaunt” to the ghost that persistently shadows him.

Ditto Thaddeus.

Doubtless the veteran was now quite positive that he *had them*—this Persian liquor is noted for its “heady” qualities, and even a campaigner of his sturdy resistance might succumb to its witchery.

He began to back away.

Thaddeus at the same time advanced.

Step by step they moved.

The Englishman had suddenly remembered that he owed Skoubekoff one—the miserable attempt upon Miss Sherwood's peace of mind made him righteously indignant every time he thought of it, and there could hardly be a better time than the present for adjudicating the difficulty.

True, Skoubekoff was a much older man than the guardsman.

There be times, however, when age does not enter into the matter whatever; since the Russian diplomat had tossed his gauntlet into the ring and entered the arena as a contestant for the heart of Mlle. Chicago, he must take "pot luck," and accept what the gods sent him.

Hence Thaddeus resolved as a committee of one to administer the reproof then and there.

When one has any unsavory business on hand there is no time like the present for putting it through, since delays are dangerous.

A dozen steps backward the Russian had gone, and still his double was as close upon him as in the beginning.

Perhaps old Skoubekoff realized, for the first time in his life, how exceedingly difficult it was to get away from himself.

Thaddeus was watching his chance.

He soon had the other "rounded up," as Miss Nina



might have put it, a ranch phrase learned upon the plains, and very significant in itself—behind the retreating general arose a wall—he found himself in a blind alley, a pocket composed of mosque and bazar, from which escape was hopeless save over his counterpart's body.

It was time!

Thaddeus hesitated no longer.

He hated to strike, but surely some such method of punishment should be dealt out to the soldier who had proved so great a discredit to his sovereign and his nation.

Skoubekoff's nature was aggressive—when he received a blow, whether from mortal man or phantom, it was a part of his religion to return it.

Perhaps he also awakened to the fact that it must be an exceedingly healthy ghost that could lay on with such extraordinary gusto.

At any rate Thaddeus found his scruples vanish with the first blow he received in the face, and from that moment devoted his energies to dealing out punishment *ad libitum*.

In this he was fairly successful, and for the space of three minutes the rivals had it hammer and tongs.

British brawn came out ahead—Thaddeus had long ago learned the science of boxing, while Skoubekoff's methods were somewhat out of date, for he had been

living upon past glories rather than keeping abreast of the times.

The result could be easily anticipated.

Skoubekoff fell.

The last stunning blow received between the eyes, had been too much for him.

Thaddeus was satisfied that he had wiped out the debt he owed this arch schemer. Perhaps the Russian would not endeavor to kidnap an Anglo-Saxon maid in a hurry again, whether on Persian or any other soil.

When the athletic wraith of himself had vanished, Skoubekoff raised himself from the ground.

His first move before arising was to look eagerly around, and had the apparition appeared again, very possibly the general would have made haste to drop back to his recumbent position; for even a man of valor may at times play the fox, when dealing with something supernatural, something beyond his ken.

As the coast was clear the wily Russian slowly struggled to his feet.

Thaddeus was watching from behind an adjacent angle of the mosque.

He chuckled when Skoubekoff rubbed himself all over as if to ascertain whether any of his bones had been broken, or to exactly locate his various bumps and bruises.

This chuckle took the form of a positive grin when

he heard the veteran let loose a volley of Russian expletives—although this language was pretty much of an unknown quantity to him, Thaddeus knew in his heart Skoubekoff was swearing black and blue, in a way that must have made a trooper turn green with envy.

Quite satisfied, the Britisher went on his way to the den of the shah's grand panjandrum, where he resumed his normal appearance.

Having a light, he examined his features, for one of the fists with which the alarmed Russian threshed the air had accidentally caught him upon a part of his physiognomy where it was best calculated to leave a lasting impression.

"By Jove! that's a beastly shame. I'm afraid I shall have something of a black eye for a time. And no raw oyster or a piece of rare beef to lay on it to-night. Well, it is in *her* service, and she will pardon my appearance. At any rate I have put both of his eyes in mourning, and perhaps his classical nose may also be out of joint. Skoube will hardly be the beauty he was, and the ladies, God bless them, may breathe easier when in his fascinating presence."

So Thaddeus dismissed the subject—it was a way he had of never borrowing trouble—some persons can always see the bright side of things in spite of dark, lowering clouds.

He left a few lines for Rory, thanking him most cordially for his signal help, and mentioning the plans they had for the future.

Then he again started for the tavern.

The night was more than half-spent, and Thaddeus naturally felt the effects of his tremendous exertions—Hercules after his labors must have welcomed a period of recuperation, and surely Thaddeus had earned repose after disposing of twelve desperadoes inside of three minutes.

He could never think of that monumental feat without a smile; and yet the memory of how he had balanced Skoubekoff's debt must afford him the keenest satisfaction.

Teheran after midnight is not the safest place in the world.

Troops of mongrel curs prowl about the streets, and on moonless nights one cannot see a yard beyond the end of his nose save in those unfrequent localities where private enterprise has hung a lantern on the outer walls.

In spite of awful examples made by the authorities, robberies were frequent, and the offenders seldom caught—knowing the inevitable consequence these desperate characters were ready to supplement thievery with murder whenever necessary to preserve their *incognito*.

Thaddeus knew all this, and as he marched back to the tavern of the Gaul he kept his faithful revolver in one hand—the other weapon he had left at the apartment of the O'Shaughnessy.

Fortune favored the brave, as it often does.

Nothing occurred to disturb the serenity of his mind, for which he was thankful, since he believed he had already seen enough action for one night at least.

At this rate he would soon be in good condition to enter the Greco-Turkish struggle when the proper time came.

It was also considerable of a pleasure to think what the Muscovite's keen chagrin must be when, upon entering the camp at the ruined mosque, the astonished desperadoes, dazed by this second advent, refused to "play dead" again.

Perhaps poor Skoubekoff might add a few additional scratches and contusions to his list before the matter was finally explained.

He would undoubtedly be the maddest and most disgruntled man under Persian skies that night when he learned how someone who imitated him in person had anticipated his coming in every particular, and carried off the lady with great *éclat*, leaving him, forsooth, to settle the bills.

Thaddeus had learned how Nina fell into the little trap. In the future she would take warning from this

experience, and not let her tender, sympathetic heart respond to every appeal for charity, for it had been through taking advantage of these gentle traits that the unscrupulous Russian had succeeded in kidnapping her from the tavern, unbeknown to even the chess players and idlers who lounged about the adjoining *tchai-khan*.

Thaddeus was resolved that nothing further should happen in the way of trouble to Miss Sherwood at least under that roof.

So he slept on his arms, as it were, with one eye open, ready to fly to her assistance should she give the signal agreed upon.

Evidently the Russian had been overwhelmed with his accumulation of disasters, or at least he had not made arrangements beyond those which Thaddeus so cleverly disorganized.

The balance of the night passed in peace, and finally a blare of native instruments announced the rising of the Parsee sun-god.

When Thaddeus met Mlle. Chicago at breakfast he laughingly bade her admire the optic which was encircled with a dusky shade, whereupon Nina expressed the greatest concern, realizing that the warrior's scars had been received in her service.

"Notice *his* face if we chance to meet again ere leaving Teheran. If you think I am improved by this

picturesque circle around my eye, you will consider him a beauty I am sure."

Her curiosity being aroused, Thaddeus was compelled to relate the funny adventure poor old Skoubekoff had had with his own shadow, and what with laughing over the comical side of it and admiring her sturdy champion's prowess, Nina forgave him for having been embroiled in a street fight over her own fair self.

They *did* meet the veteran ere leaving Teheran.

Skoubekoff was using a heavy cane—his classical features were a sight for the gods, and the look he cast upon the couple might have killed had it been a trifle more venomous.

Then his grim, swollen features relaxed in a fierce smile as he made a stiff military salute that must have cost him much pain, and passed on. Skoubekoff had suspected before—now he knew to whom he owed his dreadful defeat.

Thaddeus' discolored optic matched his own, and gave the secret away. Very good—Skoubekoff was a patient man who never forgave an injury—he could bide his time—sooner or later his hour would come.

And that morning they left Teheran.

## BOOK TWO.

### A MAID OF ATHENS.

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#### CHAPTER XI.

##### THE MAN THADDEUS MET ON THE RINGSTRASSE.

It was a raw, bleak day in early spring when, from a first-class railway carriage connected with a train from the south that had just pulled into the Sud-Bahnhof station in old Vienna, there sprang an athletic individual whom we have met before—none other than our guardsman, Thaddeus Brown.

Pushing the obsequious guard aside he assisted Miss Sherwood to alight, and then Hawkins.

The laborious journey from Teheran to Constantinople and thence to the Austrian capital had been made in fair time.

Thaddeus was quite content with the way matters were progressing—true, deep down in his heart he suspected this whole affair to be rather in the nature of a wild-goose chase; but the young woman from Chicago seemed dreadfully in earnest, and her society was so delightful that he had entered upon the hunt for the Quixotic brother with all the zeal he could muster.



While the journey had not been devoid of incident, nothing serious occurred to delay them.

No occasion arose whereby the volunteer could again prove his prowess as a soldier in behalf of Mlle. Chicago—they were not stopped by brigands seeking a ransom, nor did a stagecoach run away down the mountain side, a train wreck occur, or any serious detention annoy them.

General Skoubekoff had not shown up, and if so be he had followed the light that had dazzled his eyes in India and Teheran, his tactics in the line of secrecy were very successful.

Thaddeus really believed he had not met the Russian veteran for the last time.

At least they had reached Vienna in safety, and the next thing on the programme was to discover whether they had come in time to head the youngster off ere he started for the seat of the Greco-Turkish war around Larissa, and the famous old pass of Thermopylæ, once defended against the Persian hosts by young Leonidas and his three hundred deathless Spartans.

A vehicle was taken for the *Stadt* and presently they had reached the comfortable Hotel Archduke Charles where a broad-shouldered *lohndiener* took charge of their luggage, being bought body and soul by Thaddeus' handsome tip in lieu of *trinkgeld*.

Miss Sherwood was in a feverish state of suspense—she believed the boy to be in Vienna and was only afraid lest he might get away without her being able to secure an interview and carry out her mission.

Thaddeus was still in the dark with regard to the nature of this, but he had set it down as probable that young Robert may have been guilty of some misdemeanor that had made him a fugitive from home, and that when his father died he forgave the lad, which message the loving sister was bearing across seas, over mountains and through the wilderness in her desire to bring peace to Robert's heart, and bestow upon him a share of the great inheritance.

Having landed in Vienna, they must lose no time in opening the search.

Hardly had Mlle. Chicago been able to get at her trunks in order to make certain needed changes in dress, which of course the infatuated Thaddeus could only believe made her appear more ravishing than ever, when she was holding a council of war down in the parlor of the hotel.

Their plan of action was speedily decided, and each one had his or her work laid out.

Miss Sherwood meant to take a vehicle and haunt the famous Ringstrasse, even driving to the Prater, as the park outside the city is called, and looking along the Bastei promenade for the face she sought.

Hawkins was to visit the American consulate, and the chief of police, making inquiries at all places in the hope of discovering Robert.

As for Thaddeus, upon him devolved the task of visiting the various gardens, if they were open at this bleak time of the year—the Coliseum or *Neue-Welt*, the Hofgarten and Volksgarten, so famous in summer as resorts where throngs of pleasure seekers could be found.

After all, it was like looking for a needle in a haystack, to seek Robert in this vast city—they would find traces of him or not, just as fortune decided.

At the entrance of the hotel the three separated, after Thaddeus had seen the others into a couple of cabs.

Then the volunteer plunged into his work with his customary vim. It may sometimes seem hard to start one of these phlegmatic Britishers, but once in action they halt at no obstacle, riding roughshod over opposing foes and carrying the fort by storm.

Thaddeus had his own idea as to where a young chap like Robert might be found in old Vienna, especially if, as he suspected, the lad was inclined to be a little fast.

So he at once engaged a competent courier or *valet-de-place*, and began a round of the gardens, such as were conducted in winter, together with the most noted resorts.

Thus, later on, he could have been discovered passing from Daum's dingy coffee house in the Kohlmarkt to Nauner's in the Plankengrasse, and searching the jostling crowds in the *cafés* of Leopold Stadt.

Later on, if success failed to reach him here he meant to take a look at the Cathedral of St. Stephen in the heart of the city, where the streets radiate, the Church of the Capuchins, the Imperial Riding School, the Arsenal and such centers where curious travelers always congregate, acting under the belief that Robert would wish to see something of the famous city while within its confines.

Should all else fail, there remained the theaters, where he and Nina could go together.

Thaddeus was quite in the humor to follow the venture to its limit, once he had started.

He believed he had already gone far toward winning the regard of the young lady whom he served with the ardor of a courtier of old, and even though this mad chase led him across the mountains into the heat of battle with the Turks, nothing could cause him to relax his grip.

Many times Thaddeus felt how inadequate a photograph may be when one depends entirely upon it to find a straggler.

Still, the face of Robert Sherwood was very like that of his sister, and our young guardsman felt positive

that should his eyes ever light upon him he could not fail to discover his identity, no matter under what conditions the meeting occurred.

The afternoon waned.

Though he had covered much territory and visited dozens of resorts, Thaddeus could not call his success flattering.

In several places the picture had been immediately recognized, and the proprietor assured him the young American had been seen in his resort; but in every instance it was a back number—Robert was gone—the places he once frequented upon his arrival from Persia knew him no longer.

Hence Thaddeus felt a little disheartened as he started along the Ringstrasse intending to reach the hotel and report over the dinner table.

He was very weary, for much ground had been covered since starting upon the round.

The courier had been dismissed, with orders to show up at the caravansary later on, in case his services were needed, should Mlle. Chicago decide to visit the theaters in the evening.

Thaddeus was thus walking meditatively along the promenade, watching the crowds.

No city presents a more remarkable panorama of various nations than Vienna.

In the crowd of citizens might be seen Magyars and

Hungarians, Moravians, Poles, Czechs, Wallachian peasants, Slavs, Bohemians, Jews and Gypsies, besides representatives of all outside nations.

Thaddeus was never tired of such street scenes.

He had enjoyed them in Yokohama, Canton, Hong Kong, Singapore, Calcutta, Teheran, Constantinople and a host of smaller places.

Now he glanced at face after face with an object in view, being constantly on the *qui vive* for the original of that photograph.

It was without warning that a hand clutched his arm as some one came up behind, some one who had been skulking at his heels for several minutes in the endeavor to make sure of his identity.

Evening was at hand—already lights had sprung up in many shop windows, and the roar of passing vehicles blended with the whistles and bells that proclaimed the coming of the hour when factories yielded up their hosts of workers to add to the throngs already upon the streets.

Of course Thaddeus immediately whirled on his heel as became a military man.

He could hardly believe his eyes.

A tall figure stood there—a figure dressed in a regulation tourist garb from head to foot—a figure that immediately made an automatic salute such as British soldiers greet their officers with upon all occasions.

It was either Rory O'Shaughnessy or his wraith, and if a ghost, never did a more healthy-looking one visit this terrestrial ball.

"What! you here, Rory—you whom I last saw in Teheran, the Grand Mogul of the shah's guard? Did you fly, or was it a balloon brought you?"

While thus speaking Thaddeus had shot out his arm and seized upon the hand of the Irish rover. He could not forget what he owed this man. Perhaps there was more than mere curiosity in his questions, for the presence of the O'Shaughnessy in Vienna at such an unexpected time might have to do with his own mission there in the Magyar capital.

"Faith, be me sowl it war a train that fetcht me most av the way. As to whin I lift Teheran, sure I took the nixt conveyance afther yees. Phat ye war tilling me about the war in Grace aroused the ould blood-and-thunder spirit av me warrior anchestors widin me. Sure I niver could be contint to remain idle there whin the fate av empires was being dacided in Europe. So, bedad, I coaxed me ryal master to grant me a lave av absence, and here I am."

Rory spoke in his usual energetic manner, but the guardsman's perplexity increased rather than diminished.

"You say you left Teheran after we did. How long have you been in Vienna?" he demanded.

“Troth, we arrived lasht night.”

Thaddeus noticed that he said “we.”

“How could this be—when did you overtake us—when gain fifteen hours? I am bewildered, and feel sure this is the work of a magician.”

“Sor, ye are roight. D’ye moind the wizard that brought tin dead min to loife again in ould Teheran—the sorcerer begob whom ye bate so natelly in the blind court—it was him who influenced me to lave Persia whin I made him belave I was thirstin’ for your blood on account av that sell—it was the same crafty *Skoube* that held your train begob two hours at Constantinople while his flyer made a big sthart, for, d’ye moind Rooshan influence rules the Porte, now, istid av British. And the gineral is here in Vienna, here laying a bit av a thrap for yees, sor, a spider-web av ye plase, a contraption into which ye may tumble while he runs aff wid the purty colleen, bedad.”



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE GUARDSMAN LIMBERS UP HIS SWORD ARM.

THE news was really staggering in its import.

Skoubekoff then had not taken his defeat in Teheran as final—his nature was that of a man who never knew he was beaten—to him the game held out a fair chance of ultimate success so long as life remained.

With many men the discomfiture suffered when his remarkable scheme for self-aggrandizement burst like a bubble, and the evident scorn and contempt of the lady involved would have proven sufficient cause for overwhelming humiliation, and their next move would have been to withdraw from the affair precipitately.

Not so the Russian bulldog.

Once he set his teeth in the object of his animosity he held on with a death grip.

Little he cared that the young woman in the case had shown a decided preference for his rival. Should the Englishman make her his wife, that need not wholly discourage a man like Skoubekoff; since before his time wives had been made eligible widows.

These things trooped through the mind of Thaddeus in riotous confusion.

He was slowly but surely seeing a very evident fact—that there would be no peace for him while the Russian veteran of Plevna lived.

One must die, and Thaddeus knew of no reason why that one should be himself.

If this were only Thessaly now, and they stood on opposite sides, the momentous question could be readily settled when Greek met Turk in fierce battle array. It might come to that yet, since Thaddeus sympathized with the former, and Russian influence backed the sultan's men—of course with a selfish object in view. Russia had failed to secure Constantinople by force, owing to England's interference, and changing her tactics she now hoped to gain the same end through diplomacy in making Turkey first an ally, and then a vassal.

It can be readily understood that Thaddeus heard what the Irish roving blade had to say with feelings of mingled surprise and indignation; nor would it be at all singular if a little apprehension also made itself felt, for he could not forget that another besides himself was concerned in the matter.

Surely it would be a wise thing for him to keep his eyes open. Perhaps the same mind that conceived the brilliant scheme balked by fate and Thaddeus Brown

under Persia skies would start another racket of the same sort.

With such an antagonist there was no other way to deal save blow for blow—he must be met and matched with his own weapons.

At least Thaddeus had much to be grateful for in possessing such a devoted friend in the camp of the enemy.

—Rory O'Shaughnessy was a jewel indeed.

Questions arose, to which the Irishman made answer as best he could.

True, he had not been taken into the inner circle of Skoubekoff's council—that astute individual had always made it a point to confide his secrets to as few people as possible, and to use men only as a means to an end.

Hence, while warning Thaddeus in a general way, Rory could not specify the particular method through which the blow might fall.

It might descend upon the Englishman himself, or through the one so dear to him.

This last thought caused a gritting of the teeth, and some unuttered words that were not at all complimentary to Skoubekoff; Nina Sherwood had become a part of his very life since the meeting in Teheran, and the man who dared to attempt her injury must reckon with him.

"It is very patent to me, my good Rory, that destiny means one of us to fall in this rivalry. The world is large, but it seems too small to hold both a Thaddeus Brown and a Skoubekoff. As a consequence we may meet some day soon, and one will never leave the field.

"It may be him, it may be I—God only knows. I am in the right, and a thousand Russians, be they generals or dukes, cannot drive me away. That vow is registered from this moment. You hear, Rory," was the emphatic way he expressed himself.

Such talk just suited the fiery Celt, whose blood longed for the whirl of the battlefield.

"Spoken like a man, sor. Bad cess to the ould rapscallion anyway, says I. Phy don't he sake a conjoinal mate among his own pable and not be botherin' what belongs to an Anglo-Saxon gintleman? Jist as ye say, me darlint, there be a toime comin' whin ye must sthand face to face wid the spalpeen. Ye must be prepared for that hour."

"True—I may be rusty with the sword—out of practice with the pistol," muttered Thaddeus, grimly, as in imagination he saw himself face to face with this giant of the North, their steel blades crossing with an angry hiss, and the fires of hate and rivalry in their eyes.

"Jist so, captain dear, and av ye have half an hour

to spare, accompany me beyant the Karnthnerthor theater to a place I discovered quite be accident, a shmall den kept by a Frinchman, where ye will soon pick up all ye iver knew about a sword—and more too.”

Thaddeus was in a humor to be thus led—a fierce desire possessed him to put himself in a condition to meet the veteran at his own game, to be able to give him a whirl for his money when destiny brought them face to face.

Hence, he offered no objection when Rory signaled a passing *fiacre* and urged him to enter the vehicle.

They were speedily bowling along through streets crowded with people, and yet Thaddeus failed to take the same interest as he had previously felt in this singular cosmopolitan assemblage.

His mind was now engrossed with the cloud that overhung them, and speculating as to what species of lightning would flash forth when least expected.

Thousands of lights flashed up around. Vienna was very gay for such a season of the year, when most Christian countries were keeping Lent in sackcloth and ashes.

Presently the O'Shaughnessy ushered his captain into a most peculiar little den, and introduced him to the proprietor, one Monsieur Le Bouef, an expert at the manly art of self-defense, whether in the line of pistols, swords or naked fists.

Rory seemed on good terms with the Gaul, but he had previously warned his friend not to even whisper Skoubekoff's name under that roof, for just at the time it was the thing for all Frenchmen to appear very warm and friendly with the subjects of the great czar, no matter what their real feelings might be toward those whom they faced in the Crimea, while fighting shoulder to shoulder with Britons.

Monsieur was only too happy to oblige, and proceeded to put the volunteer through a systematic course of exercises.

Rory was loud in his protestations of pleasure over his captain's proficiency with the revolver, and aroused the fencing master's curiosity not a little by vague, mysterious hints concerning an affair of the past when Thaddeus had downed twelve men with an equal number of shots. Monsieur looked upon the guardsmen with additional respect when he heard this.

With the sword Thaddeus was, as he suspected, a bit rusty; but this speedily vanished when the expert took him in hand.

Monsieur was pleased to compliment the strength and suppleness of his wrist.

"*Parbleau!* you have ze making of one grand artiste, mon captain—only practice it is needed. Ze power, ze eye, ze quickness of a cat, all zese are here. I myself should not be pleased to stand up before you in a little while," he declared.

This might be what the boys call "taffy," for Frenchmen are famous flatterers; but Rory O'Shaughnessy took it all as gospel truth.

"Faith and it is a pleasure to hear such an expression av good faith. Whist, me darlint, whin the toime comes for action perhaps ye won't be able to surprise the Russ—och, it's the Turks I mane, so I do."

Monsieur cast a quick glance from one to the other, but his suspicions found no further food upon which to build.

Shortly after the friends bowled away again in their *fiacre*.

"What if he saw you in my company—might not such a thing arouse his suspicions?" asked Brown, struck with a sudden notion, for Skoubekoff was not out of his mind five minutes at a stretch now.

At this the other chuckled aloud.

"That has all been provided for, captain dear. Av the opportunity arises I am to prasume upon me ould acquaintance wid ye to gain your confidence ye see, which I am afther doin' the same, be the token, at this blissed minute, d'ye moind?" with a droll wink of a very humorous eye.

"Yes, and I stand ready and willing to put my life and all my hopes in your hand at any day and hour," responded the guardsman.

"God bliss ye, sor, and may his hand drop palsied

to his side whin Rory O'Shaughnessy plays ye false. Belave in him through thick and thin, no matter how decavin' appearances may be."

"I do—I will, for I could as soon believe deception and treachery lurked in my own soul as in that of the bravest of Irishmen," responded Thaddeus.

Perhaps the hour might arrive when he would remember this conversation—when appearances so convicted Rory of guilt that it would be necessary to summon all his trust and faith to the front.

At the hotel Thaddeus dropped out, but before separating the friends had arranged a little code of signals by means of which they could communicate without the knowledge of outsiders.

Half an hour later Thaddeus awaited the coming of Mlle. Chicago in the hotel parlor.

He had anxiously inquired concerning her upon entering the hotel, and was considerably relieved to learn that she had been an hour or more in the suite of rooms occupied by Hawkins and herself.

Another thing that gave the soldier some uneasiness was a fleeting glimpse which he had caught of a military figure and a pair of broad, square shoulders just vanishing through the exit of the hotel as he came down from above—a figure that he recognized by intuition as belonging to his hated enemy.

That Skoubekoff had any object under this roof but



the carrying out of another scheme for his own personal glory, Thaddeus never bothered himself considering; and his curiosity was piqued as to its nature.

He remembered the sword lesson with grim satisfaction, and his arm involuntarily went through a few of the most energetic motions of the latest thrust and parry taught him by the Parisian expert, as though he already had Skoubekoff the Terrible lined up against him, and bearing down with flashing rapier.

"Heaven speed the day, the hour, when we two may meet in battle array and settle our differences with the sword," he muttered, striding up and down the parlor; "for I shall never rest easy in Austria or across the Grecian border until the Lion of Plevna is laid low!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AT DEAD OF NIGHT.

A MINUTE later Mlle. Chicago entered the room.

Thaddeus forgot most of his worries and anxieties at sight of her dear face—just as the traveler having arrived in harbor looks back complacently upon the dangers that erstwhile threatened to overwhelm him.

Together they sat and talked over the events of the day.

Nina had no good news to impart, since neither her own efforts nor those of Hawkins had produced any result.

Thaddeus then related how he had found traces of the wanderer; but he could not bring cheering intelligence, since the chances seemed to be that the irrepressible Robert had, ere now, drifted out of the Austrian capital and over the border into the thick of war clouds that were clashing in the mountain passes north of Thessaly.

Another day would settle this, no doubt.

Nina was disappointed, naturally. She had come

many thousand of miles to find this wandering brother. Over weary wastes, in the crowded mart, upon strange seas and through dangers that must have daunted a less courageous heart she had followed on, urged by love; and with each recurring disappointment her desire to find the will-o'-the-wisp grew more intense, since it fed upon defeat as a fire does on fuel.

Finally they went in to supper, and the subject was again discussed over the table, every possible feature of it being brought forward.

Thaddeus mentioned his meeting with the shah's captain of the janizaries, and his warning message concerning Skoubekoff caused the young woman from Chicago to grow very sober.

Perhaps with prophetic vision she looked into the dim future, and saw the serious trouble bound to come to them through this man.

The guardsman was not the one to boast, but he felt it only right he should speak of his visit to the sword master.

"Why did you go there?" she asked quickly, and turning a startled look upon him.

His eyes caught her glance, and in that moment soul looked into soul.

Nina Sherwood saw the passion of his heart, and while she must have long ere now divined the truth, there was that in his fervent look to bring the scarlet

flag of distress to her cheeks. The answer to her question she read there.

No one was near them, and Thaddeus, having reached this stage in his wooing would not have cared had there been a dozen.

"Because I wished to brush up my knowledge of sword play in readiness for that day of fate when Skoubekoff and I stand face to face and settle the matter forever and ay," he remarked, very calmly, very solemnly.

"What—matter?" she said slowly, almost inaudibly, letting her eyes drop—as if she did not know.

"This is a strange place to speak of such a sacred thing as *love*, but surely you must have known by my actions that I adore you—that since the hour we first met you have been enshrined in my heart as its queen. I am a plain man, and I cannot find rhetoric with which to clothe my meaning, yet God knows I love you sincerely. This man has likewise conceived some sort of passion for you—I will not call it by so sacred a name, for, as you once said, it is impossible to conceive of a man subjecting one he loves to insult. I am almost positive that some day Skoubekoff and I will settle the question at the sword's point. Come, let us leave the room and seek a more retired place where you can tell me whether I may hope."

There was little need of words.

Her luminous eyes were brimming with love as she raised them shyly to his face.

But when was an ardent wooer satisfied with a look, when his heart yearns to hear the softly whispered "I love you?"

So they wandered to the drawing room. It was grand and bleak, yet a snug, cozy corner lured them, and here the bold Briton again avowed his deathless devotion, receiving in return the positive assurance that his love was returned.

Thus at last the Anglo-American alliance was consummated, against which the whole world could not prevail.

Thaddeus sealed it on the spot, for he could be bold enough, once the Rubicon was passed.

In that hour of happiness they never gave a single thought to Skoubekoff—indeed, the whole world appeared rosy to the lovers. Robert would be found, and they might then return to England, and later on America, where in due course of time their marriage might be consummated.

It was so easy to plan.

They forgot to take into consideration the man who had sworn that Thaddeus Brown should never, never possess what was denied to him—the man whose brilliant diplomacy had done so much to advance the interests of Russia among the tribes of Asia, and whose

enmity was something to be dreaded. Skoubekoff would not be deterred in his work by the mere fact of this Anglo American alliance of offense and defense—the people to whom he belonged have usually secured what they wanted, by hook or crook. When a ponderous machine is once started it is difficult to stop.

Thaddeus had not forgotten how Nina was lured away from the Frenchman's caravansary in Teheran, and while he could not conceive how the same thing might occur in such a bustling city as Vienna, when all of them were on guard, yet he had a vague fear lest the remarkable general might conceive another astonishing plan through which he hoped to accomplish his end.

Should the opportunity present itself again on the following day Thaddeus meant to take still another lesson from the sword wizard.

That good right arm of his needed coaching in order to develop the full measure of cunning with which nature had endowed it; and something told him he would need every atom of reserve strength and prowess when the hour arrived in which he was to battle with the veteran of many bloody battlefields, with a bride as the stake.

Still, when Thaddeus retired late that night it was with a sense of happiness such as he had never before known in all his life.

Perhaps he might never experience another period of such unclouded bliss, for the storms were gathering around and must speedily break.

It seemed to the guardsman that he had hardly fallen asleep when aroused by a great clamor.

Some one was pounding on the door of his room, some one who called aloud in English :

“Captain Brown, wake up!”

Thaddeus had been dreaming of old times, and his first thought was that he must be in barracks again.

Then he took a leap through space and remembered the fact that it was a Vienna hotel at which he lodged.

What did this great racket mean—was the house on fire—at least he smelled no smoke as he sat up in bed and sniffed the air?

Perhaps he dreamed—there had been no alarm—the pounding and outcries had originated in the secret recesses of his brain—to sleep again, perchance to dream of a charming face that haunted his waking hours.

Ah! there it went once more—bang, bang, racketty bang! upon the panel, followed by what was evidently intended for a hoarse whisper, but which more closely resembled a bullish roar :

“Captain dear, will yees niver wake up?”

Jove! that could be no one but the O’Shaughnessy—the knowledge served to arouse Thaddeus as might

a galvanic shock, and whirling back the covers he was out of bed and at the door in his pajamas in a trice. As he unlocked this impediment to progress upon which the Irishman had been beating a tattoo for such a length of time, he saw not the faintest sign of a conflagration.

A number of heads had been thrust from adjacent doors, and various comments arose not at all flattering to the disturber of their peace; but the O'Shaughnessy had faced all manner of scowls in Persia and cared not a jot nor a tittle for what people said so long as he carried his point.

As the door opened he gave one look to make sure it was Thaddeus.

Then he popped through the gap.

"Sthrike a light, sor—ye'll nade it to dress by," was his first remark.

Thaddeus found his hand trembling as he reached for a match to light the gas, there being no electric button in his room.

Strange what an effect the presence of the little god has upon the human heart. Here was a man, a soldier, so bountifully supplied by nature with all that goes to make up courage that he could have walked up to the cannon's mouth and even entered the jaws of death without flinching or turning pale; yet at the slightest sign of danger hovering over the head of the



being he adored, his nerves were completely unstrung.

"Now," said Rory, with not a little decision, when the light flashed up, "I belave it would be best for ye to sake a more conjanial costume than thim pajamas, bedad. And while ye are making the change, av ye give me permission I'll be afther explainin' me prisence here at such an unsasonable hour."

This was just what Thaddeus was itching to know, but long acquaintance with the only O'Shaughnessy had taught him that it was no use endeavoring to hasten the recital—Rory would take his own time with regard to rendering an account of his stewardship, and embellish it with his usual stereotyped phrases.

These attacks were on the order of a fever—it must run its course, and the less interference, the sooner results would be reached.

So Thaddeus, while burning with impatience, busied himself in the matter of garments, knowing Rory would burst with a suppression of his news, since his spirit could not stand bottling up, but was always bubbling over.

It must concern the Russian in some way or other—that was a foregone conclusion, and whatever Skoubekoff was interested in had to do with their fortunes, since the general seemed to have abandoned all

other purposes in life save the desire to overwhelm his—Thaddeus'—dream of happiness in ruins.

In an incredibly short space of time the guardsman had partially clothed himself—a man who has traveled a good bit, and seen some little experience with a hotel on fire or a railway wreck learns to economize time, and accomplish such things with marvelous rapidity, especially if he is a soldier in the bargain, and trained for war's alarms.

By this time Rory, who had been gathering his breath after having almost exhausted his stock in running up several flights of stairs and pounding upon the panels of the captain's door, arrived at a point where he could again use some of his surplus stock in ejaculatory phrases; and, to the intense satisfaction of the guardsman opened his batteries upon the matter in hand, his first phrase at once riveting Thaddeus' eager attention.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## LEFT IN THE LURCH.

THE O'Shaughnessy had dropped his rollicking demeanor, and appeared unusually solemn, which fact added to the uneasiness of Thaddeus, since it must be a grave state of affairs indeed that could quench Rory's enthusiastic spirits.

His was one of those enviable natures that fairly bubble over with good humor—with Rory few problems cropped up in life's checkered career but contained the elements of fun, providing one knew just where to look for it.

He plucked the guardsman by the sleeve as he spoke, a favorite way with him.

"Captain, dear, the divil's own game is to pay, so it is, and I'm dapely inclined to belave Skoube has scooped us in the stharta, bad cess till him."

Fancy the feelings of a lover who had just been accepted a few hours before—if Skoubekoff had won a round in the engagement, it meant that some evil had befallen Mlle. Chicago.

Surely the bold Russian soldier would not dare attempt to carry out such a move as the one he tried in Teheran.

Vienna was not the Persian capital.

And Nina Sherwood had been duly warned to be on the watch for clever tricks.

Oh! if in some way he could only inject a hypodermic dose of electricity into the vocal cords of Rory O'Shaughnessy, and influence him to relate the whole dreadful thing, whatever its nature might be, in a breath—but alas, the Irishman must needs beat about the bush, and approach his subject by slow degrees, after his customary way.

Thaddeus, like a lion aroused, resolved to handle his Celtic friend without gloves—to badger him as a lawyer might the wretched witness in the box.

He did not cease dressing for an instant, but controlling his fears with a tremendous effort, assumed a careless demeanor.

Perhaps Rory could be spurred into revealing the facts, where coaxing was of no avail.

"You *think* he has done it—that is all. A mere puff of smoke I presume, Rory. The general is hardly equal to outwitting us here under the skies of Austria."

Eureka! the taunt succeeded.

"Say you so, sor—faith, it's been me experience

that where you say smoke ye'll be afther findin' some fire. The object av the sagacious soldier has been to separate ye from the purty colleen, and bedad, he's done it;" triumphantly.

"You don't say?" gasped Thaddeus, weakly endeavoring to keep up the strategic game, and yet almost paralyzed by what he heard.

"But I do, bad cess to the blaggard. Captain dear, phat time is it now?"

Thaddeus snatched out his watch.

"Just 4:7," he replied.

"When did ye say good-night to the darlint?"

With some men exception might be taken to such language, but the O'Shaughnessy had a way of saying things with such unctuous flattery in his voice—a way peculiar to Irishmen it seems—that no objection could be raised. What from some might have been considered bold language, was honeyed "blarney" when given from a Celtic source.

Thaddeus considered.

"I believe it was after 11. We had much to talk about," he admitted.

"Faith, I say no rason to doubt it, captain dear. You warned her to be consthantly on the watch for the approach av the insidious sarpent?"

"Again and again."

Rory sighed.

"These swate cratures are so guileless—sure, they suspect no wrong. Bad cess to the ould varmint, he could decave the best av thim. Say it wor at 12 ye last saw her, sor. And at 3 o'clock she left Vienna."

"Good heavens! you are dreaming!" ejaculated the rattled guardsman, whose knees seemed possessed of a sudden inclination to knock together with fright.

The O'Shaughnessy shook his head.

"It's me that would be only too glad to admit the soft impachment, captain dear, but I regret to say it is alas, too throe!"

"Nina gone—left Vienna—and without sending me word. It seems incredible, Rory. I can't believe such a monstrous thing."

"Bad cess till the luck, ye'll have to, sor, I'm afraid, since it is an accomplished fact."

"But, Rory, there is no regular train that leaves at such an hour—I know, because I conned the timetable closely," triumphantly.

"Special, sor," said the other laconically.

"Nina hired a special?"

"Arrah, it wor *him*, I sthrongly suspect."

Again Thaddeus felt the cold chills chasing up and down his back.

*Him* could mean but one person just now, and that the most distasteful man on earth.

Skoubekoff!

Then a fire seemed to riot in his veins—it was as though molten lava bounded through these channels instead of ordinary red blood.

At last Thaddeus was aroused to grasp the situation and realize what was required of his manhood in order to meet his enemy on a level footing. Away with all weakness—from this moment he must be alert, surprised at nothing, and ready to battle with each shrewd move of the unscrupulous general as it came up.

“See here,” he said deliberately, as he again laid a hand on Rory’s arm, “do you mean to tell me Miss Sherwood left this hotel at 3 o’clock this morning, and boarded a train in company with the man against whom I have warned her—against whom every pure element in her own heart rebels?”

The O’Shaughnessy was quick to reply.

“Arrah now, captain dear, it wasn’t me intintion to imply that they lift in company. Sure, the colleen niver suspected *he* was aboard that thrain at all, I’m mortal sure. Nivertheless, Skoube was there—it was all a divilish smart plan av his till siperate yees.”

“How do you know this?” hoarsely, as he finished dressing, and as a last act slipped the revolver in his pocket.

“By the merest accident in the wurrlid. I got an

inkling av it whin, bad cess till the look, it war too late. I'm av the opinion Skoube suspected me av playin' a double parrt—ye say, it do niver come natural loike for a thrue blue Irishman to desave aira one, and perhaps I overdid me game. At any rate from this hour forward I show me rale colors, and that is at yer 'oner's side."

"But go on—tell me—how did you learn—what have you found out? We must act presently, so do the talking now."

"Well, whin these suspacions were aroused I set about discoverin' the thruth. I heard that the Roo-shan had hired a special thrain for the south. This alarmed me, for he had been gone more than half an hour. I had a cab, and begob, I made the droiver come tearin' trough the strates like mad till I drew up here. Thin I faced the clark in the booking office below, and he towld me, the thafe av the wurld, that the young lady and her maid had lift the hotel in a vehicle and gone to take a special for the south. He was afther informin' me about a note——"

"For me?"

"Yis, to be sure."

"He has it in charge?"

"Thru, captain dear."

"That will explain the whole matter. Come, we will perhaps follow this special to the south, and in



more haste than the general expected. I am through here," ramming a few articles into his dressing case.

The O'Shaughnessy was evidently surprised and yet pleased at the business-like way in which Thaddeus took the whole matter—in his mind it argued well for the outcome—if Skoubekoff could exhibit astonishing boldness and ingenuity in fashioning his plans, they could be matched and smashed through the sheer bulldog determination of this Briton who would not be swerved from his course.

So they trotted downstairs at this rare hour in the morning, and loomed up before the vision of the clerk, who, after Rory's rush above, had been momentarily expecting them.

He said not a word, but immediately held out a white envelope.

Upon this was written:

"Captain Thaddeus Brown."

It can be set down as certain that the guardsman lost no time in tearing open the cover, and devouring the hastily written contents:

"DEAR CAPTAIN THADDEUS," it ran, "you will be very much surprised, perhaps annoyed, to learn that I am leaving Vienna without seeing you, but I assure you it is unavoidable. I shall expect you to follow in the morning. We are bound for Trieste, where I shall leave word as to our future movements. In the haste of departure I can say no more save that I have heard

from Robert, who insists upon my coming on the special train which the government is sending south with secret dispatches for certain Austrian officials watching the war along the Grecian border. It is imperative, he writes, that I tell no one, *not even you*. When we meet I will explain further. God grant that it all turns out well, and that I may be in time to *save Robert*. I rejoice to know what you told me so recently and have no reason to regret the answer I gave.

“NINA SHERWOOD.”

Thaddeus read this remarkable missive twice over and, without hesitation, gave it to the O'Shaughnessy.

“Whirra! but it's aisy to say the foine hand av the Rooshan back av it all. I don't exactly understhand the riference to Robert, but on me sowl the letther she resaved was from Skoube.”

And Thaddeus knew it must be so. The wily schemer must have discovered some of Robert's handwriting, and imitated it closely enough to deceive the anxious sister.

Thaddeus growled something under his breath—something that began with a great big D, and was exceedingly expressive of his bitter feelings toward the Muscovite who, for the second time, had stolen a march upon him while he slept. They who expected to outgeneral Skoubekoff must make up their minds not to sleep at all, or if it be absolutely necessary, to keep one eye open meanwhile.

Well, we must not stand here like a couple of fools,

Rory. It is time to *act*. Thank heaven I am liberally supplied with money, and know where to get more if I run short."

"Bedad, me pockets are brustin' wid the dhirty lucre, pressed on me by the great shah. Lit me be yer banker—I'd consider it an 'onor indade."

"Good. Sir," to the clerk, "take my account out of these notes and retain the balance. Is your cab still at the door?"

"Yis, as I haven't paid the omadaun yit."

"Then let us jump in and do you influence the man to drive like mad to Sud Bahuhof—we'll see if this Russian magician is the only man in Vienna who can hire a special for the south."

## CHAPTER XV.

### AN HOUR BEHIND AT TRIESTE.

A CABRIOLET stood in front of the hotel door—its horse showed signs of recent service.

Thaddeus tossed his dress-suit case and overcoat into the vehicle and sprang after them.

“Driver, ten florins if you whip your horse and take us to Sud Bahuhof on the jump,” he said, in fair German.

The offer electrified the Austrian jehu, who scrambled into his seat, and alert as Rory usually prided himself on being, he now found it necessary to get a sudden move upon his actions unless he wished to be left behind.

Away they went.

One or two green-coated officers wearing swords instead of the Anglo-American night stick, made a warning gesture as if dubious regarding the cabby’s right to rush so hot a pace; but no attempt was made to bring them to a halt.

So they reached the station.

At this hour in the early morning with daybreak near at hand, all was very quiet around the railway depot.

Thaddeus was very much in earnest, and followed by the O'Shaughnessy, who had snatched up the bundles, he dashed into the building, leaving the delighted driver fingering his fee.

An official was speedily run across.

Thaddeus found there was a certain amount of red tape necessary ere the special could be secured. These things were not of ordinary occurrence on the Austrian lines, and when two of them were required in a single night it threatened to tax the resources of the road in order to manipulate them without accident.

Though the Englishman chafed at the delay, under the knowledge that the girl he loved was speeding away mile after mile, his patience was finally rewarded.

They shot out of the Austrian capital just as the first peep of dawn began to appear in the east.

At any rate he had two hours' start of the first regular train, and expected to increase this lead throughout the entire day.

Thaddeus had a map of the whole country and endeavored to figure just where the special they were pursuing must be.

It had two hours' start, and they could not expect to overtake it unless something occurred to detain the

former—and much as he desired to overhaul the Muscovite, Thaddeus did not dream of wishing for such an accident, since that train bore one who was very precious to him. They kept the rails hot.

Those Austrians might be slow to make a start, but having commenced a thing they kept it up with rare good will.

Up slopes and down, through defiles, along fertile valleys, now barren and bleak, they trailed and dashed like a great serpent.

Now tunnels darkened around them, and anon they were speeding over elevations where the snow lay in frozen banks.

At a station where a change of motors delayed them for five minutes Rory secured breakfast enough for two, such as it was, while Thaddeus picked up some information regarding the time of the other special.

They had gained upon it, partly owing to some delay which had befallen the leader.

Still half an hour meant much.

Thaddeus was pleased, and content to look upon this as an omen of good luck.

Throughout the morning they boomed away.

Noon came and went.

Thaddeus still figured on the time of their arrival and he believed it would be somewhere in the neighborhood of 3 o'clock.

Considering the mountainous country traversed during this three hundred and odd mile journey, this was making good speed.

Close calculations told him they would arrive about an hour later than the government special.

That single hour worried him exceedingly.

Often the fate of nations is determined within the radius of less than sixty seconds.

Besides, the fact that the Austrian government was sending officials to watch the progress of the battles on the border of Thessaly, in order to receive an unbiased report, had something to do with his uneasiness—he feared lest arrangements might have been made to forward them by sea to their destination, and that in some way Miss Sherwood, with her American vim, might undertake to accompany them, with the idea of getting to the front without delay.

This would be exasperating.

Still, Thaddeus could follow—money would do much on sea as well as on land.

He set his teeth together with the grim determination that carries men over all obstacles, however appalling.

The race was still open, and the longest pole knocked the persimmons, as he had once heard an American friend express it.

Just as he expected, they drew into Trieste about 3 in the afternoon.

When Thaddeus had a view of the harbor while the special was descending the slope, the first thing that caught his attention was a steamer leaving; a small craft, bearing the Austrian flag.

From their receptacle he snatched his fieldglasses and immediately covered the vessel.

The declining April sun shone clear, and upon the deck he first of all discovered a number of officers, among them, just as he feared, the Russian general, Skoubekoff.

Thaddeus knew what to expect, and in a trice he had covered the two feminine figures near the stern.

There could be no mistake—he recognized the girl of his heart and her maid.

How eagerly he watched.

Once he believed their attention was directed toward the train, and quick as a flash he threw out his white handkerchief.

There was an answering flutter of white—then Nina had seen—she understood that this lover had followed after on the wings of the lightning.

Thaddeus' joy was short-lived, for he quickly discovered the Russian also waving his snowy neck muffler, as if to taunt him upon the fact of his arriving too late.

Evidently Skoubekoff's eyesight suffered no diminution of its power by reason of age—he had always



been as keen of vision as the hawk of his native land.

Thaddeus had foreseen such a state of affairs as this, and endeavored to prepare for it.

Surely they could discover some sort of steam vessel in an open port like Trieste that might be chartered for the pursuit.

He did not forget how essential it was to learn the destination of the steamer bearing the Austrian company of observation—whether they meant to watch the bombardment of the Turkish forts at Prevesa at the mouth of Arta's gulf, sail direct to Athens, observe the operations around Philippiana and Janina, where the Greeks had invaded Albania, or making direct for the Gulf of Volo on the east coast, land and be witnesses of the Turkish advance through the mountain passes of Milouna and Revini, to be followed by subsequent battles on the plains of Thessaly around Larissa.

Surely from some source he could discover this fact, and his future movements would depend very much upon the nature of this information. If Athens was meant, there might be a shorter route than by sea; though Thaddeus, knowing the scarcity of railroad accommodations in the region of southwestern Turkey, doubted it.

The train had hardly come to a stop before Thad-

deus called the guard and had him unlock the carriage door—that guard lived only to do the bidding of the grand English seignor who had lined his pockets with *florins* and *zwanzigers* without limit.

Just as he alighted a man approached as though to address him. To Thaddeus' surprise a police officer standing near immediately intercepted the stranger.

The man persisted, the officer used force.

Thaddeus, his suspicions arising, drew near, and distinctly heard a voice call:

"Herr Brown, for you, from the *fraulein*."

Something white fluttered toward him, propelled over the tall police officer's head—it was a note attached to a small weight.

The discomfited official, who had doubtless been hired by Skoubekoff to prevent this messenger from communicating with Thaddeus, made a lunge at the flying object, but he was far too slow.

It fell in front of the Briton who stooped and possessed himself of it ere the officer could do so. The latter started to demand that it be handed over to him, but one look at the Englishman's sturdy figure and frowning face was enough to convince him as to the wisdom of a withdrawal.

So Thaddeus was granted the privilege of examining in peace the few lines his message held, evidently written in haste with pencil:

"We start on the steamer Trieste inside of half an hour, with the Austrian officers who are going to the front. I do not know whether their destination is Athens or Volo Harbor, but they will see me safe to where Robert may be found. How I wish you were with me now—but I know you will follow—that your faith will remain as firm as a rock. God bless you, my Thaddeus,

NINA."

He pressed the mute paper that bore such eloquent witness of her love, to his lips.

Follow—he would tramp over the whole world for her sake, sail unknown seas, penetrate Asiatic jungle or African wilderness—even the Sahara would not daunt him.

Such is the impetuosity of love—it endureth all things, braveth all dangers, and transforms the soul.

The next move was to find a vessel equal to the task of following the Trieste.

He arranged with the O'Shaughnessy to carry out this search between them.

The messenger was impressed into the service, carrying the luggage to a certain point of the harbor where he was to remain until relieved.

From the fellow Thaddeus learned several things beyond the fact that the beautiful fraulein had personally engaged him.

That which was of most importance concerned the paucity of steam vessels in the harbor at the time—his

report in this respect gave the young Englishman much worry.

Nevertheless Thaddeus had considerable faith in the lucky star under which he had been born, and a settled conviction that a just heaven could not and would not allow such a schemer as Skoubekoff to triumph in his unrighteous cause.

Alas! the wily Muscovite had been victorious in many another game of hearts where might triumphed over right—the war of Greek and Turk was to be just such another example, for often the ways of Providence are inscrutable; though when we look back we can see each defeat has been a means to an end, a step in the ladder upward, spurring us on to glorious deeds in the future.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## OFF FOR THE SEAT OF WAR.

THE search was begun in earnest, and yet Thaddeus felt handicapped by the knowledge that, in all probability, he would find no vessel in the harbor which could be hired.

Trieste is quite an important seaport, opening upon the Adriatic, and as a usual thing money can secure a vessel for service along the coast, provided one is not too particular as to the looks and ability of the craft.

Perhaps it was owing to the prevalence of war near by that had an influence upon the shipping, or the season of year may have had to do with it. There were vessels laid up at winter quarters or on the ways undergoing repairs, but beyond this the harbor seemed destitute of steam craft.

Thaddeus soon found what an exceedingly tough game he was up against, and, not a little discouraged, stood upon the quay looking seaward. There, riding at anchor in the harbor was a small steam yacht, a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

She was painted black, and the sun glinted from polished brass about her railings and deck furnishings.

Riding the little waves that came rolling in from the sea, as though imbued with the qualities of a duck, she appeared as saucy a conception of a nautical tourist's fancy as might be imagined. From her stern floated the Union Jack, and upon this dearly beloved emblem Thaddeus feasted his eyes hungrily.

When an Englishman is in trouble the sight of his flag brings mental relief—under its folds he counts upon receiving succor and sympathy.

Thus Thaddeus, in desperation, was rapidly allowing his thoughts to crystallize around this dandy steam yacht.

He had not the remotest idea as to whom the vessel belonged, but something within told him he would not be disappointed if he looked for help from such a source.

His situation being so desperate, he could not allow time to slip by without venturing everything upon this last deal.

Besides, the hour was getting late—presently the smiling face of old Phœbus would drop out of sight behind the blue sea horizon, and somehow the thought of another night lost filled Thaddeus with incalculable alarm.

Hailing a waterman nearby he dropped into his boat and was speedily alongside the yacht.

As he came up he noticed upon the bow the magic name: "Talisman."

Perhaps that was a good omen; but Thaddeus mounted to the deck with considerable uneasiness. It is always darkest before dawn, and he little suspected what was in store for him.

"Is the owner of the Talisman aboard?" he asked of a natty looking young officer who approached with a man-o'-war regulation salute.

"In the cabin, sir—ah! here he comes now," was the reply.

Thaddeus turned and the next moment rushed forward with eager outstretched hand.

"Sir Giles—what luck, good heavens!" he exclaimed, as the other met his advance with almost equal fervor.

An Englishman, beyond a peradventure, and a man who might be sure of attracting attention in a crowd, on account of his striking characteristics. Not that he was a giant or a warrior bold—on the contrary Sir Giles appeared rather effeminate than otherwise; but he wore a golden Van Dyke beard and his eyes were as blue as Italia's skies, while his Bohemian blood further sported itself in a velvet coat and a sash about the waist.

Sir Giles was an artist of no mean repute, but being left wealthy by an eccentric relative, he could indulge in such whims as most men of his nature dream about and never reach.

The steam yacht was of course a floating palace, upon which Sir Giles cruised from port to port, painting the beauties of Algerian, Spanish, Italian and Moorish scenes, for his tastes ran entirely in the Oriental groove.

He dragged Thaddeus into a palatial cabin, the beauties of which aroused the enthusiasm of the pilgrim, despite his desperate need of haste.

"Now tell me what brings you here, and what I can do for you, my dear boy?" he said after having insisted on Thaddeus accepting a weed.

"I can do that in about five minutes," was the quick reply.

And Thaddeus kept his word, for he sketched his recent adventures with a rapidity that fairly took Sir Giles' breath away.

But he grasped the situation like a man, and hardly had the volunteer reached that point in his narrative where he sought some means of following the Russian diplomat to the scene of war, when Sir Giles sprang at him impulsively and caught his hand again between his own cold slender digits.

"Brown, my dear fellow, you have come to the



right quarter. My little boat is at your disposal. Tell me when you will be ready to start. In half an hour we can have steam up."

Thaddeus was deeply moved by this expression of fraternal feeling.

"This is kind of you, Sir Giles—just what one might expect from a fellow with such a big heart as you possess. But it would be selfish to drag you away from here to a region in which you have no mortal interest, simply to further my individual purpose."

"Stop right there. I go and come where I please, and if you must know it I was preparing before you turned up to hunt this fighting line. I am tired of peaceful pictures, and wish to paint Greek and Turk at each other's throat. Your coming has only whipped my vague plans into definite shape. In half an hour, Brown, the Talisman starts south. Can you be ready?"

"God bless you, Sir Giles—you are a friend indeed. I shall not attempt to thank you in words, but you know how I feel in my heart. Yes, I can be back in half an hour with O'Shaughnessy—perhaps you remember the brave fellow. He will amuse you with his tales of Persian life, for he is only off on a vacation now, and bound to report again to the shah, who places more reliance on Rory than all the rest of his janizaries."

"Well, waste no time. We can have all the talk we desire when under way. There's something more than accident in this meeting, my boy. You were born under a lucky star, surely," said the artist.

Thaddeus acknowledged to himself as he was being paddled to the quay that fortune did appear to smile benignly upon him—whenever misfortune frowned, a chance immediately opened whereby he could avoid the impending calamity and come out of the affair with flying colors.

There was the mock battle outside the ancient walls of Persia's proud capital—the astute Russian had laid the lines for a grand entertainment in which he was to take a leading part; but this gentle cherub that watched over the fortunes of the man from London substituted him in the hero's part, whereby all the glory came to Albion.

Then that meeting in the narrow Teheran street, had it not come to pass especially to give him the long desired opportunity whereby he might unload his holdings of stock upon Skoubekoff, and present him with the compliments of the season at short range?

Thaddeus had only to cudgel his brain a little in order to see numerous other instances wherein this good luck served him well, and last, but far from least, was the meeting with such a genial friend as the artist baronet, owner of the steam yacht Talisman.

Thaddeus was easily able to keep his word.

The luggage was found under charge of the fellow who had borne Nina's note, and close by, the guardsmen discovered Rory endeavoring to converse with an Austrian by using a choice combination of English-Irish mixed with Persian, and accentuating his words with extravagant gestures that further bewildered the emperor's subject.

Evidently Rory was endeavoring to learn something about the trim steam yacht in the harbor, upon which he cast many a longing glance; but the Austrian boatman, unable to catch the drift of his questions, kept repeating that he would carry him to the stranger craft for two florins.

Great was the O'Shaughnessy's joy when he learned what a piece of good fortune had befallen them. He exhibited all the energy of a schoolboy in cracking his heels together, and by various ejaculations giving expression to his delight.

The half-hour was hardly up when Thaddeus again set foot on board the jaunty little craft, and received the heartiest kind of a welcome from the owner.

Steam had been raised, and already the anchor was coming out of the mud.

The sun just hovered above the penciled line of watery horizon, and a few clouds were beginning to take on the crimson and gold tints with which old Sol

delights to paint his couch surroundings ere drawing the curtains for the night.

Thaddeus stood looking yearningly toward the south, in the direction whence the steamer had gone that bore the girl he loved, as well as the man he both hated and feared, in a sense.

Long ago it had passed out of sight.

They could not tell whence the Trieste was bound, save in a general way, so that after all their pursuit must be reckoned something of a wild-goose chase.

All that the guardsman had to keep up his courage was the hope that springs eternal in the healthy human breast, and a keen remembrance of what wonderful things good fortune had hammered out of chaos for him in the past.

It was with keen satisfaction that he heard the whistle sound, and the farewell report of the little brass gun which was carried on deck for such salutes.

At last they were off!

Once out of the harbor their course changed to almost due south.

Ere now smiling Phœbus had dipped out of sight; and the grand colors that marked the dying day were turning to blue and gray, as the shades of night advanced out of defile and valley where they had lain in wait since early dawn, weeping across the sea like trooping phalanxes.

Thaddeus, used to long twilights in his English home and upon his Scotch moorland estate, where he kept a shooting box, never could get quite used to this rather sudden transition from day into night.

As the Austrian town vanished from their view, and on all sides but the port a heaving sea met the eye, Thaddeus knew they were surely *en route*. How he longed to raise the curtain and see what the end of this adventure might be; but that was not reserved for mortal power.

Sir Giles was a merry wag, and knowing what a weight rested on the mind of his friend he aroused himself to cheer Thaddeus up.

In this laudable endeavor he had an able second in the O'Shaughnessy, and during the evening, after dinner had been served, they made a merry time of it, telling extravagant yarns, cracking jokes and singing to the accompaniment of mandolin and guitar, for the artist baronet possessed a rare tenor voice, and Rory chimed in harmoniously with his deep bass.

Thus the hours slipped away, while the yacht that bore the Union Jack plowed the southern sea in the wake of the steamer Trieste—bound for the seat of war.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE WRECK OF THE TALISMAN.

It was about midnight when Thaddeus turned in.

Darkness had speedily given way to the full moon, rising above the rugged horizon that marked the coast of Istria; and when they came on deck about 8 o'clock the scene was one of enchanting beauty.

Thaddeus would have considered it charming beyond all rivalry if only Mlle. Chicago strolled about the little deck of the steam yacht at his side.

At it was fears returned to annoy him.

He wrestled with them as might the gladiator in the arena.

Sir Giles would not allow him to be alone any great length of time, for he could readily guess the condition of his thoughts, and in his cheery way sought to make him have high hopes of success, even though personally he could not see just where the guardsman was to find those he so eagerly sought, for the sea leaves no trail.

Hundreds of miles lay before them ere their destination could be reached, even though it be the Gulf of

Arta, where the Greek fleet had been bombarding the Turkish forts.

The Adriatic is a great body of water, and hundreds of islands lie along the Austrian and Turkish coasts ere the border of Grecian territory is reached.

It is a treacherous body of water—at times severe storms sweep across its bosom—in one hour the laughing blue sea changes to inky black, the dimpling wavelets become huge, lashing billows, and upon those rocky shores thousands of stanch boats have gone to pieces in the centuries that have slipped away since the days when Athens was the center of learning, and Grecian prowess ruled the world.

Sir Giles knew this.

True, he had never himself encountered a storm in the Adriatic, but he had a captain who could tell of a fearful experience.

Therefore, even though the night seemed so fair, the skipper depended more upon his barometer, and from the falling of the mercury he soon realized there was dirty weather coming.

This gave him uneasiness, with such a coast on his larboard quarter, and deeming prudence the better part of speed he shifted his course more to the south, since the coast line led southeast.

When the guardsman awoke he found that morning had come.

The little vessel no longer glided over a smooth, moon-kissed sea, but tumbled like a cork in the Whirlpool Rapids of Niagara. Indeed, her eccentric movements somewhat reminded Thaddeus of a bucking broncho which he had ridden for a very brief time upon the western plains when sight-seeing through America—now the steam yacht appeared to rear up just as that vicious animal had done, and anon plunged her nose downward, while tons of salt water flooded her deck.

"Jove! this is an experience. I must have slept like a brick not to have discovered such antics before, and only for the additional security of this berth I would have landed on the floor long ere now. How in the world am I to dress? It will be a genuine gymnastic feat, no doubt."

Fortunately Thaddeus had always been a good sailor, and the dreadful *mal-de-mer* was a stranger to him.

He managed to obtain considerable amusement out of the gymnastic feats required in order to retain his equipoise while dressing. One who has never been through the mill can never imagine the strain such a task involves.

Upon emerging from his stateroom Thaddeus ran across a figure in the cabin that at once drew his attention—a weird figure partly dressed in some gaudy



Persian robe—a figure that groaned and swore by turns as pain or anger held sway—that now made the sign of the cross and presently bowed his head to the floor in true Mohammedan style, as though seeking to propitiate the angry storm-god by every style of devotion known in his repertoire.

It was the only O'Shaughnessy, of course, about as seasick and wretched a sinner as could be found in a month's travel.

He had just reached the point between those two extremes of seasickness when the dreadful alarm lest the boat is going down merges into the fear that after all she will not sink—when oblivion seems to be the only panacea for mortal woes.

Thaddeus stopped near the woebegone figure and shouted some words of good cheer; but alas, he might as well have saved his breath, for Rory never gave him even a look, but continued counting his beads, and groaning and making the most amazing gurgling sounds imaginable.

Thaddeus desired to go on deck to ascertain what sort of a sea the blue Adriatic could kick up. It was usually so placid and charming that ocular evidence would be necessary in order to thoroughly convince him that it was capable of playing them such a miserable trick.

And while he was deliberating as to how he might

accomplish this feat, Sir Giles came along, clad in a panoply of dripping oilskin, and looking very unlike the dandy he usually appeared.

Under his directions Thaddeus was presently rigged out in a similar suit and led on deck, after having been duly warned regarding the necessity of maintaining a powerful grip and lashing himself securely.

It was indeed a wild picture.

The guardsman had seen storms upon the ocean before, but there is a material difference whether one gazes upon the heaving billows from the deck of a monster trans-Atlantic mail steamer, or a midget steam yacht.

Having lashed himself fast Thaddeus watched the impressive scene.

His heart seemed to stand still when the gallant little craft plunged downward into an awful gulf; but she arose again like a cork and continued on her reeling course.

Presently, ere she could recover, a second billow broke over her bow—the stanch product of Clyde ship-building quivered under the terrific strain, and it seemed to Thaddeus as though she must be crushed by the tremendous amount of water hurled upon her decks.

But from this baptism she emerged as before, and again mounted another heaving billow.

So it went on, time and again.

The strain upon even the stanchest of vessels during a storm lasting for days must be incalculable. No wonder ships are never heard from after leaving port, when one little thing neglected at such a time would suffice to send the unfortunate vessel to the bottom—an open hatch, a weak plank, a broken rudder chain, allowing the ship to broach to in the trough of the sea, which would knock her on her beam ends; such trifles have settled the fate of many a gallant bark ere now. These facts always loom up mountain high when the danger is present.

Another thing came into the mind of the guardsman and caused him considerable uneasiness.

Nina was doubtless experiencing the same Adriatic storm upon the old Trieste.

From what he had heard of the mail steamer, she was not an A No. 1 seaworthy craft, and the coast had always been reckoned a very inhospitable one upon which to be wrecked, the shores being rocky, the currents around the many islands and capes treacherous, and various other dangers menacing the mariner unfortunate enough to meet with disaster.

No wonder the ancient Greeks became such bold sailors with a coast like this along their borders, where eternal vigilance must be the price of safety for their frail and unwieldy armadas.

Really, this concern for Nina gave him more anxiety than the dangers menacing the Talisman. He pictured all manner of mental catastrophes, and groaned to think that his good angel gave him no opportunity for flying to her aid.

It was impossible to converse, even though Sir Giles were within arms' reach.

The howling and shrieking of the wind, the roar of breaking billows upon the deck, together with such other sounds as the whirr of the propellor as it arose above the water while they prepared to rush down into a yawning abyss, created such a clamor that a strong pair of lungs would be needed to have made the human voice heard.

Sir Giles was most concerned about the propeller, and every time he heard its mad whirr when lacking the resistance of the water, Thaddeus could see the deep anxiety written upon his face.

And no wonder, for should anything happen to that screw, they would very likely find themselves the sport of the tempest, with a good chance of claiming a watery grave.

Finally Sir Giles, unable to stand the strain any longer, went below with the intention of interviewing the engineer, and ascertaining whether something could not be done to lessen the risk.

He seemed partially successful at least, for Thaddeus

noticed a diminished tension when the propeller fanned the air.

So it went on during the day.

Meals were a farce, since the cook could not start a fire in his galley—in truth the poor devil could not even keep his feet, but was doubled up in his berth, from which neither threats nor cajoleries could induce him to emerge—at such a time flattery, and bribes lose their power.

Still Sir Giles had good sea legs, and he knew where to get plenty of ordinary provisions, so that there was little likelihood of any one going hungry aboard the *Talisman* who was possessed of an appetite under such stormy conditions.

The day wore on.

Thaddeus had spent much of the time in the saloon, since a little of the rough experience on deck satisfied him.

O'Shaughnessy had gotten over the worst of his sickness, but he looked like a gaunt ghost, and his best friends would never have guessed this ashen gray wretch was the usually red-faced hilarious Celt.

No one dared mention food to him, and yet he had once again changed his mind about the possible fate awaiting them, and was possessed of a lively apprehension lest the little yacht founder while they were shut up in the cabin.

He insisted on strapping several cork life preservers about his body, since he could not swim a stroke.

An expert would not have found much opportunity to avail himself of his art in such a tempestuous sea; and if he were a wise man must have trusted more to the mercies of cork than his knowledge of aquatics.

It was an awful day, one that Thaddeus could never forget in years to come, provided he lived through this danger, and others that might be in store for him upon the battlefield.

There was worse in prospect.

When night came the storm showed no signs of abating—indeed, Sir Giles was of the opinion that it had increased in violence, proving that they had not yet reached the center of the disturbance.

His skipper was worried.

It was utterly impossible to tell just where they were drifting—the gale had followed after them, so that in a measure they were blown before it, and the general direction of wind and sea was toward the southeast.

Thus, unless they managed to keep off to starboard there was a chance of their bringing up on one of the rocky islands around the coast of Montenegro, somewhere above the Grecian shores.

Filled with this concern, the skipper endeavored to work as far to starboard as he dared, knowing the

fearful power which the wind and the wash of the sea had toward sweeping them in the quarter where danger lay.

It was impossible to turn the little craft—could this have been accomplished all might have been well, since the power of the engine would have allowed them to at least hold their own until the fierce gale moderated.

Thus the night began.

What a contrast to the previous one when the fair mistress of the star-decked heavens looked down so peacefully upon the enchanted marine picture.

Thaddeus had no intention of seeking his berth.

No one dreamed of doing this.

The cabin offered a chance to rest as easily as the pitching and tossing of the little yacht would allow.

Rory still clung to his cork—it had an affinity for him, possibly because of old associations in the dear Emerald Isle, which he loudly lamented he would never again behold.

Clad in his fantastic garb, and buttressed with this double supply of strapped life preservers until he resembled a bale of cotton, the O'Shaughnessy insisted on staggering about the cabin, at times praying, swearing, weeping and carrying on like one possessed.

Six times, as the vessel reeled under the impact of a

monster billow, Rory had rushed over to his former captain, and throwing his arms about his neck in a maudlin way, bade him an affecting farewell.

It was growing monotonous.

It was also very ludicrous, or at least might have seemed so but for the element of danger that continued to hover above them.

Thaddeus himself was not quite certain but that one or two of these shuddering experiences meant the total collapse of the little craft that had held her own for over fifteen hours. Surely, they make stanch ships, those canny Scots on the river Clyde.

The guardsman was wise—under Sir Giles' tutelage he had quietly prepared for the worst.

What valuables he had with him he secured in his inner pockets, and kept a life preserver within reach.

Nothing more could be done, and this self-contained English soldier, having made his peace with heaven, not knowing whether he would be permitted to see the light of another day, reclined in one of the stationary easy-chairs of the cabin, and prepared to be as comfortable as the conditions would allow.

With that, Rory, utterly worn out, followed suit.

The scene was a strange one, with the floor assuming all manner of geometrical planes until at times Thaddeus feared he would be thrown from his seat by the force of gravitation.



A single lamp, chained in stays, shed a sickly light around.

Thaddeus dropped off asleep, for human nature can become accustomed to almost anything when weary. The last thing he remembered was a grunt from the spot where Rory, life preservers and all, had crushed himself into a half-round chair, and thus wedged his person against sudden upheaval.

Suddenly Thaddeus was aroused by a tremendous shock—it was entirely different from all those that had preceded it, since this time it came from below.

The guardsman was instantly on his feet.

As he noticed that the little yacht no longer rose and fell so buoyantly upon the billows, the awful truth flashed upon his mind.

She was fast upon a fatal rock—the end had come!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## A NIGHT OF TERROR.

CAPTAIN BROWN was by nature capable of maintaining a certain amount of coolness in the face of imminent danger.

Moreover, he had anticipated just such a sudden catastrophe, and when one has prepared himself for the shock it is not so difficult to bear.

At least, he thought, even though the floor of the cabin was tilted almost at an angle of forty-five degrees, standing could be accomplished much more easily than when the boat was plunging up and down with all the gyrations of a mad horse.

Ere he had time to make the first move, his attention was drawn to the other end of the cabin, where a chair that had broken loose from its moorings and fallen over sideways, arose in the air and actually advanced toward him.

After all there was nothing so mysterious about the affair, since the voice of the Irishman could be heard bawling lustily for assistance in order to get free from the arm-chair into which he had become so firmly

wedged on account of his cork coat, that a divorce could only be secured by some energetic outside influence.

It was no time to laugh at the ridiculous predicament into which Rory had fallen, in thus making a human tortoise of himself.

The guardsman seized hold of the obstreperous chair, and with a muscular effort freed his wretched friend.

Then he too snatched up a life preserver upon which Rory had cast his eager eye, not being satisfied with the number already worn, and fastened it around his body, just under the arms, securing the straps over his shoulders in order that it might not slip down and betray him.

All of which was done in much quicker time than it takes to tell the same.

Thaddeus knew a grave crisis was upon them and that the jaunty yacht had met her doom.

Whether a single soul of those on board would ever live to reach the land, depended upon the distance they were out and the favor of Providence.

Candidly, Thaddeus did not believe there could be more than one chance in ten for them.

No sooner therefore had he released the O'Shaughnessy and secured the cork jacket around his own body than he sprang to the cabin door.

This was warped out of shape and required an exertion of his utmost strength, aided by the thoroughly aroused Rory, ere it could be dragged into obeying their will.

As soon as it was open water rushed in.

Rory gave a screech, but the actual sight of danger seemed to arouse him—the man was as brave as an African lion ashore and could lead the most daredevil assault on a battery; but on the water, so greatly was his system affected by sea-sickness, he seemed to be a panic-stricken coward.

To delay now would be fatal, since the cabin must presently be a death trap; so both men plunged through water that reached to their knees, and staggered to the companion way.

It was no longer barred against egress—the danger of seas swamping the vessel from above had given way to the more positive peril from below, since cruel rocks had pierced her shell, and upon the reef she hung like a stricken bird.

Once upon deck the guardsman found Bedlam had broken loose. The roar of the giant breakers upon adjacent rocks was simply frightful, and with clock-like regularity these on-rushing billows would dash against the wrecked yacht, sending a thrill through her entire timbers, and whirling a cloud of spume and spray athwart her inclined deck.

Altogether it was such a situation that must remain vividly in the mind for a long time—that must loom up again in memory during the wakeful hours of a peaceful night when the dull throbbing of the surf pounding upon the beach would arouse recollections of this awful conflict.

Here Thaddeus found his comrades.

Already several of the crew had been swept away to their fate.

Others were holding on as best they could.

Sir Giles was much in evidence, and greatly to the surprise of Thaddeus, the baronet exhibited such lofty courage as only a hero may show.

Hope they had little—it seemed only a question of time when each and every man would be sent to meet his Maker.

Under such conditions all that a man may do is to face the music bravely.

Still, it is strange how human nature clings to life—how every straw is utilized in the hope of keeping afloat.

Sir Giles retained an astonishing amount of coolness considering how close the grim monster hovered.

The captain had been injured during the wrecking of the yacht, and Sir Giles it was who assisted him to a place of comparative safety, and bound him to a stanchion.

Thaddeus pushed close to the baronet.

Conversation in the midst of such a Bedlam was well nigh impossible, but by dint of shouting they could make themselves heard.

"This is a sad ending to our cruise," said the guardsman, as though reproaching himself for having coaxed his friend to make the trip.

"Never mind the yacht—all on board may go down and welcome, if only the men could be saved. As you say it is a dreadful ending," came the response, bawled into his ear.

"Have we any chance?" asked Thaddeus.

"Doctors never say die. Some of us may by good luck reach the land."

Sir Giles' words implied but a small grain of hope that such a happy conclusion could be reached, and somehow they seemed to Thaddeus to apply only to the valiant O'Shaughnessy, encased in his various layers of cork life preservers until he resembled a barrel—surely if any escaped it should be the inimitable Rory.

This was neither the time nor place for humor, and he could no longer smile at the Irishman's oddities, especially when they seemed after all to give promise of saving Rory's precious carcass.

"Can we do anything?" he asked, more mechanically than because he had any idea that Sir Giles

could suggest a plan by means of which they might baffle the impending doom that stretched out its eager hand to engulf them.

“For the present, hold on and await developments. The yacht is exceedingly well built and will not go to pieces in a hurry, though nothing can hope to escape such awful pounding above and below. If we can only hold out until daylight our chances will be improved.”

Sir Giles did not make all these remarks at once, but by jerks. There were various breaks in his shouting, when all his energies were required to resist the sweep of wind and wave.

Thaddeus knew what a slender chance awaited them, and while determined to resist the grim monster to the uttermost, would not indulge in any dreams that were apt to be blasted.

Mensometimes fight for life in a dogged way peculiar to the desire to perpetuate their mortal existence, which in itself is the heritage of every healthy human being, and to the last gasp will buffet the overwhelming billows of adversity, going down at last with their arms in motion.

The minutes crept along like leaden time.

An hour—why it seemed an eternity.

They had no means of making the passage of time, save by the pulsations of the mighty waves that

dashed over the stranded craft, or perhaps the wild throbbing of their own hearts.

Some men have become gray during such a frightful experience, while others have died from the strain and exposure.

Counting the captain, Sir Giles, the O'Shaughnessy and Thaddeus, there had been ten in the party when they first gathered upon that part of the yacht highest above the clamorous sea.

All the rest had gone overboard.

Occasionally some mountainous billow would sweep over them, burying every inch of the craft.

Thus three of the sailors had been torn from their moorings and swept away.

It was like remorseless fate—the greedy sea would never be satiated, and stretched out its eager and hungry hands for more.

How slowly the time dragged on.

Good God, would daylight never come and give them perhaps a glimpse of this shore upon which, dead or alive, they were fated to be cast?

The vessel was surely settling.

After each struggle with these periodical and unusually heavy seas she seemed to rock more violently.

No doubt the gap was widening where the jagged rock had torn through her vitals.

At any time one of these spasms might hurl the



yacht from the pedestal upon which mischance had settled her, when her sinking would be a matter of minutes, possibly seconds.

It was for such a dire catastrophe they prepared themselves.

Sir Giles had even gone below and routed out a number of cork jackets, with which he supplied those who, taken unawares by the sudden shock when the yacht brought up on the reef, had been given no opportunity to secure such a necessity.

Each mariner held in his halfbenumbed hand a clasp-knife, ready to slash at the cords that held him fast, whenever the necessity for such rapid action occurred.

Never did men hail the appearance of gray dawn in the east with more eagerness.

And yet the coming of daylight in one sense only served to accentuate their misery; it showed them such glimpses of an inhospitable shore, whence none among them could hardly expect to reach alive.

It is natural for brave men to feel easier when they can see the danger menacing them—one has a horror of fighting in the dark.

At least they now knew what to expect.

No valiant life-savers guarded this coast, ready to put out in the life boat; or, shooting a line over the wreck, man the breeches buoy so that the imperiled marines could be saved.

Instead, it was a wild, inhospitable shore, where not a helping hand would be raised to assist those who might survive the passage of the reefs.

As the daylight increased they looked in vain for some diminution in the fury of the gale. While it no longer increased in fury, the sky was still leaden, the wind whistled, and whipped the peaks of the combing billows into spume that flew like rain before its stinging breath, while the mountainous waves still hammered monotonously, like Vulcans of the deep, against the toy ship which misfortune had thrown into their grasp.

The end was near.

Sir Giles knew it and gave ample warning, that one and all might be prepared for the worst.

They were keenly alert as to the best way of buffet-ing those wild waters, and many anxious looks were cast toward the jagged rocks that in several places showed their ugly teeth, like grim sentinels guarding the less angry reach beyond.

Then came a mighty shock.

It was over; for the little yacht was lifted from her bed and tossed loose upon the boiling caldron of whirling waters.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

It was a moment when every man on board the doomed steam yacht had to think and act for himself.

Thaddeus instantly cut the rope that had up to this time prevented the hungry sea from claiming him as a victim.

A glance around showed him that the others had done likewise, and were ready to make the leap.

It required an astonishing amount of nerve to plunge headlong into that seething mass of water, but nothing else remained. Already the vessel was rapidly filling, and about to founder—indeed, the next gigantic billow would doubtless swamp the yacht entirely.

Not a second was to be lost.

Thaddeus was the last man aboard—he saw the others take the awful leap, and that he remained was not owing to any lack of determination or nerve, but cool calculation.

As the sinking vessel was being driven further in toward the second range of reefs he had some slender

hope that it might reach these rocks and be lifted upon them, thus giving him another chance to remain by the Talisman until the sea lessened in fury.

In thus lingering he was taking tremendous chances—another billow swept over the craft and almost tore him away—after it had gone he knew the boat was on the point of settling—he could even feel the premonitory shiver that pervaded her entire frame like the convulsion of a dying man.

To remain longer would be madness.

So the guardsman made a rush for the side and took a header into the sea.

Thaddeus was a strong swimmer, and surely he required all his powers in order to keep his head above water in the midst of such a seething mass. The cork jacket gave him great assistance, and but for its buoyancy he must have perished miserably in short order.

Striking out with all his strength he endeavored to fight his way to the south, for a careful survey of the dangers menacing them had shown those on the yacht that in this quarter they had the best chance of passing the ugly rocks that, like the Scylla and Charybdis of the ancient Greeks, threatened their destruction.

There was little chance of learning what measure of success rewarded his manly efforts, except that if he failed he would soon experience his doom when dashed with herculean force against the black rocks.

All around him was a confused roaring, such as might usher in the day of doom, or presage the coming of the cyclone's fatal sweep.

Since sight was denied him, Thaddeus depended entirely upon his other senses—he knew it was absolutely necessary that he keep the onward rush of the water upon his right, and to this end he fought as only a strong man battling for his life may.

Then his hearing was strained to discover the position of the nearest rocks, for once he passed them it was his intention to let the tide sweep him in ere he had a chance to encounter the second pile.

He was little more than a feather tossed hither and yon upon the disturbed bosom of the Ionian sea, and should fortune decide to rescue him from such a desperate pit of despair, it would be more through the will of Providence than any feeble endeavor he was capable of promoting.

Now the roar of the reefs apparently sounded behind.

Thaddeus altered his tactics.

He no longer resisted the sweep of the tide, and in fact lent his assistance toward hastening the conclusion.

It might just as well be settled speedily one way or the other—this agony of mind was worse than any final result.

Thus was he carried on—the roaring grew louder, and while he arose and fell upon the waves Thaddeus felt sure he heard the same grinding tumult on his right, which went to prove his surmise as to being between the sentinel rocks accurate.

On, and now he had a vague glimpse of the water-lashed black Scylla on his left, as he was swept rapidly through a channel wide enough to have admitted the yacht, had fortune held her wheel and steered clear of the first outlying reef.

Once his feet touched something solid, but only for a second, for the next wave swept him along, and he was past the most terrible part of the danger.

Thaddeus now realized that he had a fighting chance for his life, and, like the hero he was, struggled desperately to come out victor.

Closer to the shore he drew.

Whether he would be able to make a landing or not was unknown.

At least the sea was less fierce in this offing, and he found several opportunities to catch a fleeting glimpse of the rugged shore near by.

Had any of his comrades survived the crucial test?

Thaddeus had no time to think of this just then—it would come later, should he be so extremely fortunate as to cheat the hungry sea of a victim.

He knew there lay a severe task before him when

the waves would cast him up—should the shore prove to be a sandy beach well and good, but appearances indicated that more than likely he would find it a rocky barrier.

At any rate the time for action was now at hand, and luckily he had not as yet entirely exhausted those astonishing powers which nature accords her children when struggling for actual existence, so that Thaddeus was able to enter this final engagement with considerable vigor.

Buffeting the waves he endeavored to hold out against their influence until the trend of the undertow carried him a little further on, to where the shore was sandy and sloping.

The success or failure of this act meant much to the guardsman—that is, if his life was worth fighting for.

Of course he succeeded—that must be a foregone conclusion, else had this story had never been written.

Gaining his point he now turned his attention toward making as gentle a landing as possible, for these rude waves had a peculiar way of tossing a frail human being about with as scant ceremony as giants at play might blow a thistledown.

It was just at this juncture that something came in contact with him—something that almost demoralized him with the sudden impact.

Thaddeus, gasping and choking, threw out both

arms, and thus one of his hands fell upon the object which the waves had projected against him.

It was a body—undoubtedly one of his companions belonging to the wretched yacht.

He could not see the face owing to the difficulty of using his eyes, soaked as they were with salt water, and the fact that the man's coat had been washed up over his head.

Thaddeus closed his hand fiercely, hardly realizing what he was doing, but impelled by some half-formed idea that it was only right he should attempt to drag this poor devil ashore also.

In another moment he was in the midst of the dashing spray—immense curling waves beat upon the sandy beach like the trip-hammers of mighty blacksmiths—under that terrible anvil chorus the life has been pounded from many an exhausted mariner in the years that have gone.

A brief struggle, and after twice losing his footing, to be drawn back by the exultant sea, Thaddeus gained the shore.

He had held on to his burden with a death grip, as though it were part and parcel with himself, and when finally emerging from the surf, to stagger up the beach, weak though he was he dragged the other also beyond reach of the waves.

Then Thaddeus, trembling like an aspen leaf, sank



to the sand. Perhaps deep down in his heart he was thanking Almighty God for the power that had seconded his desperate efforts at self-preservation. Thoughts like this well up in the heart after the battle has been fought and won.

When he had in a measure recovered his breath, he remembered his comrades. Were they all drowned, and he the only one left to tell the tale? Heaven forbid.

Spurred on by this awful fear he scrambled to his feet and looked along the shore.

Some dark object came rolling in on a wave and was as quickly snatched back again.

Thaddeus made a rush the next time it appeared and dragged the form out. It was the wretched cook, who had doubtless gone over in the start. Of course not an atom of life remained in his body.

Remembering the other man he had drawn ashore at the time of his own landing Thaddeus turned in that quarter.

Considerably to his surprise and satisfaction, as he drew near the spot it was to discover the party on hands and knees, crawling further away from the pounding surf, as though returning consciousness had imbued him with the one thought to the effect that his greatest enemy lay in that quarter, still reaching out eager hands to embrace him.

The coat still concealed his face, and Thaddeus was

as yet in the dark as to his identity, although a great hope sprang up in his breast.

"Hello, there, I say!" he shouted, above the din of the elements.

The crawling man immediately scrambled to his feet and tossed the coat back from his head.

"Thank God!" muttered Thaddeus.

It was Sir Giles.

In another moment these two friends were embracing each other vigorously. A strange spectacle to see men, water soaked and hardly able to stand through very weakness, clasp their arms about each other; but there are times and occasions when the fountains of the soul are stirred to their depths, and all reserve is cast aside.

A hurried explanation ensued, and when strength had in a measure returned to them they realized the danger of remaining quiet.

Soaked through as they were the strong wind felt very cutting, penetrating to the marrow, and it was very essential that they should exercise in order to avoid serious consequences.

Then again there were duties to perform—others of those from the wreck may have reached the shore alive and be in need of assistance. Besides, Thaddeus was secretly concerned with regard to the old steamer Trieste, and anxious to learn her fate.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE DOGS OF WAR.

ALONG the shore they went—at times progress was easy enough, but again they were compelled to scramble like wild goats over the rough rocks.

Success crowned their efforts in a much greater measure than they had anticipated or dared to expect.

One of the sailors was found, insensible but alive, and while they worked over him voices sounded near by—English voices uttering shouts of joy, and a squad of men appeared.

These turned out to be the captain, Rory O'Shaughnessy, and three of the sailors.

They had in some way fastened on to a floating spar or plank when thrown overboard, and assisted by an undertow or current, had been swept through the passage between the rocks, landing further down the shore.

Sir Giles began to appear more cheerful.

He cared not the snap of his finger for the handsome boat, which was very probably insured in

Lloyds at any rate, and only bemoaned the fate of his bold mariners.

There were three others unaccounted for out of those who had remained on board to the last.

One man turned up presently, a second saw the smoke of the fire they managed to build in a sheltered spot in order to dry their garments, Thaddeus supplying matches from a waterproof case in his pocket, but the third was never heard from—his fate could only be surmised.

Their next move must be to find shelter and food. No one could say where they were, though the captain and Sir Giles had an idea it was not far from the Gulf of Arta.

Thaddeus had relapsed into silence.

His thoughts were far from pleasant, since he had in mind those who were on the Trieste. It was hardly possible that she could have escaped the storm, and at the mere idea of what must inevitably follow, the guardsman grew sick at heart, and his face lost its color at the thought of Nina in the midst of those ravenous waves.

About this time a native showed up, having come to see what the smoke signified. These were troublous times, and with the thunder of modern artillery along the Greek frontier, and the fierce war cries of Bashi Bazouks startling their ears at all hours, it was not to

be wondered at that the Greek peasant was armed to the teeth.

When he discovered their nationality he advanced readily enough. The Greeks are not out of touch with the world, even though they cling to the method of dress and warfare known to their forefathers with a tenacity shown by no other clannish people of modern times, not even excepting the Scotch.

This particular fellow actually talked fair English.

He had spent ten years in America, the land of the free, the home of all exiles, which explained the mystery. No doubt during that decade the worthy Greek had accumulated quite a snug fortune in disposing of hokey-pokey ice-cream after the manner of the majority of his fellow countrymen in America, and returned at last to his beloved Ætolia to purchase a farm and live contentedly ever afterward, until the call to arms against the invading Turk had aroused the warlike spirit inherited from his ancestors of historical fame.

When seen for the first time one might be inclined to show some hilarity over the singular appearance of a genuine Greek soldier. Indeed, it was a question in the mind of Thaddeus when the other hove in sight, whether the approaching figure could be a man returning from a masquerade, or a female ballet dancer in abbreviated skirts.

Familiarity breeds contempt—at least it accustoms one to the most ridiculous of attires, and later on the guardsman forgot all about these minor matters in his admiration for the modern Greek as a man of war, worthy of cherishing the great fame handed down from posterity through a line of valiant ancestors.

From this peasant soldier they learned much that was pertinent to their condition.

First of all they were south of Arta's Gulf, where the Grecian fleet was finding some amusement in shelling the Turkish batteries and town of Prevesa.

They could reach the Grecian camp in the mountains by securing mounts at Vonitza, some ten miles back on the gulf, or possibly assistance might be secured at Fort Punta, at the entrance to the gulf.

Sir Giles consulted with his friends.

The captain was for seeking the fort as most convenient. His wounds really needed attention. Then, as the vessel was gone, he and his men would be glad to ship for home at the first opportunity. Sir Giles could easily pay them off, since he carried plenty of letters of credit and notes in secure hiding places, which even salt water could not find.

As for Thaddeus, the poor fellow was utterly at sea, not knowing which way to turn.

Nina was in his mind constantly—he dreaded the walk up the beach to the fort, for fear lest at any turn

they come upon the wreck of the Trieste with all its attendant horrors.

Hope lay almost dead in his heart.

Sir Giles endeavored to cheer him up, with some small success. It was quite natural that after passing through what he had Thaddeus should experience a depression of his usually cheerful frame of mind; but not on his own account did he worry.

The baronet made arrangements with their good Greek friend to look after any bodies that might come ashore later on.

He grieved deeply over the loss of his men, yet carried himself as became a true Briton, taking the rough knocks of that knave misfortune with much of the grim demeanor of a stoic.

Thus they made slow progress toward the tongue of land where the Greeks had maintained a fort almost exactly across from the Turkish town of Prevesa, which had been heavily fortified in anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities.

The Greeks had also planted new batteries on their promontory, for they were determined to control the Bay of Arta at all hazards.

Thaddeus picked up a little hope, as they saw no signs of the steamer along the coast.

The storm too had broken, old Sol looking out from behind the clouds, and the wind dying down. Already

the fury of the sea had diminished, and gave promise of speedily abating altogether.

Finally, as they drew near the fort, an occasional dull growl reached their ears which could not be mistaken—it was the deep-throated detonation of some heavy gun either in shore battery or upon some man-of-war in the shelter of the bay, where the storm could not have interfered to any great extent with the operations of the fleet.

Somehow the sound caused a peculiar feeling in the breast of Thaddeus.

He was a soldier, and longed for the music of battle as only a nature endowed with the qualities of a warrior may. At last then, he heard the roar of cannon fired with a dreadful meaning. Only a military man could appreciate his feelings as he listened to that significant throbbing pulsation, steadily growing louder as they advanced; the wind becoming gradually less violent ceased to carry the report off to leeward.

At length, wearied and faint with hunger, as the day began to wane, they entered the redoubt of the Grecian fort, to receive a warm welcome from the commandant.

Shipwrecked mariners always appeal to the heart of those who inhabit the rocky coasts of Greece, for, a race of sailors themselves from the days of Spartan and Athenian glory, these people appreciate the perils



of the sea, and what dire necessity there is for sympathy and a helping hand at times.

Food and clothing were provided for them, although there was some trouble about securing enough of the latter to go around; and hence Rory found himself compelled, in company with some of the sailors, to don the Grecian style of dress.

This was only an incident in the checkered career of the Irish wanderer. As a soldier of fortune he was ready to adopt any necessary measure, and if in China professed himself willing to enjoy birds'-nest soup, sharks'-fins cutlets or even rodent fry. Besides, when a man has served a few years as the Grand Major Domo to the Shah of Persia, adopting the regulation habits that are in vogue in that enlightened country, he can readily enough put up with almost anything.

Rory had vast quantities of fun in his abbreviated garb, and amused quite a crowd of friendly soldiers as well as his fellow-shipwrecked mariners by dancing a wonderful Highland fling, no doubt inspired by the wearing of what he was pleased to style a "kilt."

Thaddeus was unable to learn anything about the steamer, though the commandant of the post endeavored to bolster up his hopes by telling him the captain was a veteran who knew the dangers of the coast better than most men, and that in all probability, upon finding he could not make a port he had put to sea so

that he might have a clear field in which to battle with wind and wave.

This was precisely what their own tactics had been, but the little yacht lacked the power to hold her own against the storm—hence her sad fate.

The day closed in with affairs in this shape.

Until he learned something definite about the Trieste Thaddeus hardly knew how to move, where to go, or what to do in order to serve Nina.

He was continually praying in his heart for her safety, even though this must also include that of his most bitter enemy, the Russian diplomat.

With the coming of night preparations began for heavy work. Signals had been exchanged with the Grecian gunboats—signals that meant war in dead earnest. All that had up to this time been done was to be reckoned mere child's play in comparison with the serious business now in hand. Whatever the Turkish army in the east, under Edhem Pasha might accomplish in their operations around Milouna Pass and Larissa, things were destined to go pretty much in the Greeks' way throughout the northwestern frontier, where the heroic Colonel Manos, whose name must ever be associated with the revolution against Turkish authority in the island of Crete, was yet to carry his arms far into Epirus and on to Janina.

Looking back over the field of the war it is very

easy to see that, had the Greeks been able to beat the Moslem advance in the mountain passes, and have held these coigns of vantage, the final results would have been much more to their advantage; but however heroic the men, they were comparatively few in numbers beside their adversaries, and not half as well armed. The Turk, as the sick man of Europe, had been taken good care of by those philanthropists who were interested in his monetary condition, and entered into the war better equipped in every way than the subjects of King George.

Darkness had hardly fallen on this night when the bombardment opened.

The heavens seemed to fairly quiver under the shock as ponderous engines of war from fort and fleet delivered their iron missiles. Flashes could be seen almost incessantly, cutting the Stygian darkness like electric bolts, while the constant crash of deep-throated guns announced that the old feud between Christian and Moslem had again opened.

# BOOK THREE.

## WHERE GREEK MET TURK ON THE FRONTIER.

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### CHAPTER XXI.

#### BOMBARDMENT OF THE TURKISH REDOUBT.

LONG into the April night Thaddeus stood on the redoubt, a witness to this startling panorama of modern warfare.

There were features about the scene that invested it with unusual interest in his eyes. First of all, though he had played at soldier for years and even been engaged in mimic battles on training days, this was really his first introduction to actual *bonafide* war, and the noise of cannonading sounded like long-anticipated music in his ears, while he eagerly drank in the weird spectacle afforded by bombs bursting in mid air.

The darkness after a little while was dissipated by the rising of the moon, and the scene changed then, for the outlines of the distant battleships could be vaguely discerned.

Thaddeus had made good friends of the officers in charge of the Greek fort, and at their side he spent some hours during the earlier part of the night.

By mere accident Sir Giles learned of a singular fact which he communicated to his friend. It concerned the American girl, Mlle. Chicago. There was a letter awaiting her at the fort, which seemed to indicate that the destination of the Trieste with her Austrian envoys was the Gulf of Arta.

Thaddeus, though of course deeply interested, knew not whether to discover anything of an encouraging nature in this information or not. The mere fact that the Trieste had not been heard from was sufficient evidence that she had encountered the storm, and he could not shake off the grave fears that crowded his mind regarding her foundering at sea with all on board.

Wearied as he was he could not dream of attempting to seek sleep.

His excuse for remaining abroad was the desire he naturally felt to witness the bombardment and the spirited reply of the Turkish forts, which did not intend to surrender without a vigorous resistance.

There are no more daredevil fighters on the globe to-day than these same Moslems—they proved it in the war with Russia, and now Greece was fated to discover this fact to her sorrow.

In reality the guardsman was kept from seeking his couch by other considerations than a desire to watch the progress of battle. Anxiety had fast hold upon

him—the little demon can banish sleep, no matter how weary the body may be.

Presently Thaddeus, who had been watching the gunners manipulate a big piece of ordnance, and even had the honor of himself sending one shot toward Prevesa as a token of his sympathy for the Greek cause, saw a messenger approach the commandant.

The latter upon reading the dispatch hastily issued orders that not another shot be fired.

Puzzled to know the meaning of this strange command, the guardsman and Sir Giles discussed matters with all the avidity possible. Thaddeus was of the opinion that a Turkish force had been secretly dispatched by boat to some point up the coast, and that an attack was to be made on the fort.

On the other hand Sir Giles pointed out that while some excitement seemed to have permeated the defenders of the earthworks, they were making no especial efforts looking toward the coming of a foe from the land.

Sir Giles was rather of the opinion that an attack was expected from the sea.

"We shall be treated to other demonstrations," he declared, "for if those terrible Turks once get a footing it will be war to the knife. Perhaps you and I had better arm ourselves and strike a blow for Greece and Christianity here and now."

Thaddeus was willing—indeed, in the state of mind which uncertainty as to Nina's fate left him, the guardsman was quite ready to seize upon any pretext for participating in the excitement.

There are times when a man welcomes even danger—when the most distressing condition of mind is brought about through idleness.

So they eagerly sought weapons, and found little difficulty in being supplied with guns, as there appeared to be no lack of firearms both large and small, among the defenders of the fort.

The cannonading still kept up between the fleet and the Turkish redoubts—long had this bitter animosity slumbered, and now that the outbreak had come it was apt to prove as terrible as the flow of Vesuvius during an eruption.

Blow for blow the Moslems would return—courage was not confined to the descendants of Leonidas and Spartacus of old—these men of Stamboul could fight like demons when once aroused, which fact has been the prime cause for their remaining so long in possession of their corner of southeastern Europe.

From the Greek fort not a shot came—men crouched at the guns and seemed to await the signal before sending their iron hail hurtling over the narrow entrance to the bay.

Somehow Thaddeus was forcibly reminded of a great

cat crouching in anticipation of coming prey—teeth and claws were ready to rend and tear ferociously when the moment arrived for the mask to be thrown aside.

Upon watching the nearest gunners more closely they saw that attention was almost wholly taken up in scanning the water to seaward.

Evidently something was expected in that quarter—something that concerned them deeply.

Thaddeus found his interest growing by leaps and bounds.

He was possessed of considerable curiosity, and the conditions certainly warranted an exercise of this trait bequeathed to all the children of old Mother Eve.

Sir Giles was not the man to ponder over such a mystery when the opportunity to discover the truth was close to his hand.

The commandant was down with the gunners and ready no doubt to fire his pistol as a signal for a tremendous outburst of artillery.

Close by, however, a Greek captain stood, a very civil fellow who had several times been of service to our shipwrecked mariners.

This worthy the baronet addressed—for luckily again the Hellenic officer could speak English though with something of an effort, it is true.

The answer given did not surprise Sir Giles to any great extent.



Word had been received that a Turkish gunboat was creeping into the mouth of the bay, doubtless with some dark and sinister mission in view, and the commandant had ordered the guns to cease firing, in order to deceive those on board into a false sense of security. When the proper moment came, such a volley of iron hail would be poured into the hostile craft that must send her to the bottom like a riddled pepper-box.

There was a grim earnestness about these deadly preparations that struck Thaddeus as very suggestive of warfare.

He felt satisfied to know that he was not on the doomed craft. It was bad enough to pass through all the horrors of a wreck, and fight for life against the awful powers of the sea, without becoming a target for man's modern artillery, discharged with the purpose of hurling destruction to all around.

A stir aroused the guardsman.

"She has been sighted!" said Sir Giles hearsely, craning his neck to catch a first glimpse of the vessel.

It was not hard to do this—the brilliant moon lighted up the waters of the strait, so that one could even catch a misty view of the Adriatic Sea beyond the point.

A dark object appeared—there were glowing lights that looked like evil eyes, and sparks ascended from the funnel above her hurricane deck.

Somehow Thaddeus conceived the idea that the Turkish gunboat made limping progress, as might a vessel lately pounded by heavy seas so that her engines were out of gear. Doubtless this sluggish advance was a part of caution—she might dread juxtaposition with a Grecian torpedo, for it had been bruited abroad that a vast store of these fearful engines of war were in the hands of King George's followers, to be used in case the Turkish fleet dared venture upon a bold policy—alas! investigation after the war proved that these torpedoes were very harmless, as few of them were ever in a condition where they could be discharged. Thaddeus figured that it would take the fated gunboat just ten minutes to cross the imaginary line which the guns of the fort covered.

Ten minutes to live!

It was indeed a brief span, and he could not but feel a peculiar pity for the poor devils aboard the on-coming craft, who seemed to so little suspect their impending doom. He was forcibly reminded of the sword of Damocles, suspended by but a single hair, and ready to fall with swift and unerring consequences when the Grecian commandant should give the signal.

The boat loomed up closer and closer.

It was even possible to hear the sound of her screw threshing the water in a peculiar wabby way that sounded very unnatural.

How strange that they suspected nothing—he could not understand how men would show so small an amount of acumen. Really, if Turkish soldiers were no more sagacious than these marines, the army of Edhem Pasha would very likely walk into some sort of trap set in the intricate mountain passes by the defenders of the Olympian range, and find themselves gobbled up, or at least baffled like Xerxes of old had been in these same heights.

Five minutes now!

The strain began to tell on Thaddeus—when dogs are held in the leash their impatience grows apace.

It seemed to his excited imagination that the booming of guns on the other side of the bay, where the Greek ironclads were pounding the Turkish forts about Prevesa, accentuated the passing of seconds in the advance of the doomed vessel.

It was a giant's anvil chorus, and the sledge hammers of the blacksmiths were Krupp guns or those of Armstrong.

The five minutes no longer stood as a symbol marking the delineation between time and eternity for those on board the gunboat. Three would cover it now, and even that brief respite was fast slipping away.

Sir Giles had strangely enough saved a pair of field-glasses—the valued gift of a lady friend. He had

them strapped to his back when he went overboard, and they promised to be of considerable value to the baronet among the mountains marking the border of Thessaly, where duty was so soon to carry the adventurous Briton.

Thaddeus seeing his friend drop the glasses, mechanically stretched out his hand for them.

He covered the vessel, already so close that it seemed a folly to use the glasses save to overcome the misleading effect of the misty moonlight.

Suddenly Sir Giles heard his comrade utter a choking ejaculation, and saw him spring up from the broken caisson upon which he had been seated—saw him show all the elements of intense excitement, and caught the sentence that burst like a bomb from his lips:

“Good heavens! not a Turkish gunboat; but the Austrian steamer Trieste with Nina on board!”

## CHAPTER XXII.

## NOT A SECOND TO SPARE.

It was no time for paralysis then—a single minute wasted might mean the utter demolition of the crippled steamer, which, having wrestled with the tempest and barely escaped foundering, was now limping into harbor, her worn-out officers never suspecting the grave nature of the peril hanging over them.

One minute—sixty seconds between them and eternity!

When that brief period had elapsed, unless something almost miraculous occurred meanwhile to prevent the awful consummation, the storm would break without warning.

Less than sixty seconds, for Thaddeus had already consumed several in springing to his feet.

There are times when to act is the only thing left, since thought is denied one. Such an occasion now confronted the guardsman, and luckily he saw his course clean out before him.

He did not halt between two opinions and lose

precious seconds endeavoring to decide what was the better plan to pursue.

One line of action opened before him.

To prevent the threatening disaster it was first of all necessary that the grim and expectant commandant be forestalled in his intentions with regard to giving the signal.

Only a moment before he had been close by, but the glance Thaddeus shot in that direction failed to disclose the tall form of the military leader.

Further down the line he swept his eyes, and immediately discovered the one he sought, standing on a barrel keenly watching the advance of the crippled steamer, which, in the misty and uncertain moonlight it was easy to imagine constituted all the dreaded possibilities of a Turkish gunboat, laden with fierce Bashi Bazouks, eager to show their prowess on fields of blood.

Thaddeus no sooner caught sight of the officer than he started on the jump.

Sir Giles was at his heels, but being no sprinter he lost ground from the start.

No man ever had better cause for making haste than our guardsman, since in the balance hung human lives, and among them that most precious to him on earth.

A dozen of those tremendous jumps would in all

probability suffice to land him beside the Greek colonel.

Hardly had he taken half of them when to his horror he saw the other begin to elevate his arm—in that hand he clutched an American revolver, and at the instant when the vessel reached that line where she would be exposed to the concentrated fire of all the guns in the redoubt, his itching finger meant to press the trigger that would serve as an electric button; for each gunner crouched back of his piece, ready to obey the sound.

Desperation lent wings to the mad passage of the on-rushing Britisher—no hope of a prize in the arena could ever have induced him to put forth any such amazing efforts. Here he was endeavoring to save what was more precious to him individually than all the world—the life of his sweetheart.

Sir Giles, outclassed in the start, could only come to a stand and gaze after his friend in mute suspense as to how the affair would terminate.

Each second he expected to see the fire spout from the weapon which the colonel had raised above his head, and have his hearing stunned by the dreadful crash of artillery.

Would Thaddeus accomplish it—could he reach the commandant in time?

If ever Sir Giles sent up an involuntary prayer to

the Throne of Grace he did while standing there as if glued to the spot, watching the guardsman make such hot time in annihilating the space between himself and the commandant.

One long breath—then Sir Giles saw Thaddeus spring upward and deliberately snatch something from the colonel's hand.

There would be no signal shot given—at least not from that source.

Angry words followed—but the steamer was moving past, and no gunner dared on his life discharge a shot without authority.

The colonel at first thought this singular action on Thaddeus' part meant treachery, and naturally represented such interference with his prerogatives; hence his indignant protest.

When, however, he caught what Thaddeus was saying over and over, a dim suspicion of the awful truth burst upon his brain.

An Austrian steamer!

What if the avalanche of solid shot and shell had been launched upon the craft—not only would his own star of destiny have sunk forever under the load of disgrace, but his beloved country might have been involved in war with the nation of the Double Eagles, for Austria-Hungary would never accept so feeble an explanation and apology as he might make.



What a narrow escape!

He threw his arms around Thaddeus when he could command his emotions, and thanked him most heartily.

As for the guardsman, now that he had accomplished his task, a spasm of weakness came surging over him, and he must have fallen but for the support given by the commandant.

Briefly he explained what he knew of the Trieste and why he had such a keen interest in the Austrian coaster. Some of this the colonel had heard before, but the story had a greater interest for him now that he seemed to share in the results.

Meanwhile the disabled steamer had drifted past and come to an anchor just beyond the range of the fort's guns.

Evidently those on board did not dream what a narrow escape they had experienced on account of the flag being twisted around the staff, and the deceptive moonlight.

Thaddeus aroused himself—an eagerness to see the girl of his heart almost overcame him.

He had a warm adherent in the commandant—indeed, so grateful was the Greek colonel that just then Thaddeus could hardly have expressed a wish that he would not have gratified, had it been within his power.

The guns of the fort were again turned upon the

distant redoubts of the Turks, and while their thunder rumbled over the waters of Arta, a boat was gotten in readiness down at the eastern extremity of the fort and nearest the anchorage of the Austrian steamer.

Into this entered Thaddeus, Sir Giles, and the Greek colonel.

Presently they were pulling away for the Trieste.

The steamer looked as though she had come through a serious danger—she had a perceptible list to starboard, either owing to a leak or the shifting of her cargo during the tremendous gale, and her limping gait as she entered the strait proclaimed some material damage done to her machinery.

Glad were those on board to find a port where safety awaited them. Possibly the Austrian representatives on board were delighted with the prospect of thus early satisfying their desire to see something of the war.

No European nation dwells in secure peace—with them war is ever an impending visitor, and they must keep constantly on the *qui vive* lest it catch them napping and unprepared.

Hence Austria's desire to learn how matters were progressing—she intended receiving the reports from a reliable source and without having them colored at Athens or Constantinople; in which the Dual Empire showed a discretion which other nations as deeply interested might have followed.

Thaddeus approached the anchored steamer with no little emotion.

His heart throbbed wildly—the prospect of again seeing the girl who had confessed her love for him, and promised at some future day to become his own beloved wife affected him in a more powerful way than the presence of death in the raging tempest when the steam yacht made her last plunge.

Was everything well?

Somehow, quite naturally, perhaps, he seemed to anticipate more trouble—that some accident might have befallen Nina during the storm.

He could hardly keep his impatience within decent bounds as they approached the steamer.

Her waist was low, and some officers, noting their coming, had ordered the ladder placed in position. Thaddeus looked along the rail hoping to catch the flutter of feminine garments, but in this he was disappointed.

While the sailors were securing the boat Thaddeus seized hold of the ladder and scrambled aloft. The first man with whom he came face to face as he sprang upon the deck of the Trieste was Skoubekoff.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A NIGHT UNDER THE GREEK FLAG.

THE guardsman had a decided advantage in this sudden meeting, since to be forwarned is to be forearmed, and he was quite aware of his Russian rival's presence on board the Trieste.

Skoubekoff showed all the symptoms of sheer amazement at thus encountering one whom he fondly hoped was still on Austrian territory, or perhaps at the bottom of the Adriatic.

Without a word, and giving the old diplomat only a careless look, Thaddeus pushed by him, leaving the Russian frozen with amazement and consternation.

The captain was near by, an old sea dog, just as the Greek commandant had informed him, who undoubtedly deserved much credit for bringing his vessel safely into port under such discouraging conditions.

In another minute the colonel was shaking the sailor's hand heartily, and introducing Thaddeus as his friend.

"You owe your lives to him, one and all," declared the impulsive Greek.

This aroused curiosity that could only be satisfied by a rapid sketch of what had so lately occurred.

No wonder the bluff sailor squeezed the hand of the Briton when he learned how much they owed to his presence of mind and prompt action.

He stood ready to do anything and everything that lay in his power, in order to accommodate this savior of the old Trieste.

Thaddeus had only one favor to ask.

"Take me to Miss Sherwood—she is my affianced wife," he said huskily.

"You may go to her—in the cabin—this way, sir. Permit me to say, old bachelor that I am, I envy you the possession of such a charming girl; but I had thought—that is, the general gave me to understand——"

Thaddeus could not delay in order to explain.

"Ask the commandant—he will tell you all," he flung back over his shoulder.

The Austrian sailor, who seemed to be as well versed in the diplomatic usages of society as he was in the working of his vessel in time of distress, had to be content to take the story second hand.

Old bachelor he might be, but this did not prevent him from appreciating the ardor with which a young lover might press forward to a meeting with such a rare girl as Mlle. Chicago.

The cabin was easily found.

There were evidences all around that spoke eloquently of the perils through which the steamer had so recently passed in battling with the aroused elements; but Thaddeus gave little attention to such things.

Nina was there, settled in a chair, with a few tufted silken Daghestan pillows about her.

She looked pale, as though the terrible experience of the last thirty hours had borne heavily upon her. Perhaps, if the truth might be told, the concern she felt for Thaddeus, whom she suspected would manage to secure some sort of craft and follow her down the Adriatic, had much to do with her present condition.

At least, she later on admitted this soft impeachment, with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes, for she was in the shelter of his arms.

When the bluff guardsman so uncereemoniously entered the cabin of the Trieste Nina half-started from her chair—her face grew even whiter, and she stared as though a ghost had arisen.

Then, as Thaddeus stepped impulsively forward with his arms outstretched, the color swept into her cheeks again and she gasped his name.

His arms were about her, his burning kisses upon her lips and cheeks and hair.

It was no dream, no dreadful phantom come to

mock her, but a blessed reality, and in the shelter of that strong bulwark she felt able to defy fate.

Together they sat upon the divan and related their experience in the storm.

What Thaddeus had to tell in relation to his adventures, even though he made no attempt to make his conduct appear more than commonplace, thrilled the gentle listener, and as he spoke of battling for life amid those hungry waves, involuntarily a pair of plump arms crept out from their confinement and met about his neck, while Nina's starry eyes looked up, filled with tender love.

It were worth passing through dire perils and even mocking the portals of death itself to meet with such a reward as this.

What have not men dared in the past, with love as their guiding star?

Many of the achievements recorded in history received their inspiration from such a source. As an incentive to gallant deeds, the world knows not the equal of this divine spark flashing from one heart to another in full sympathy.

Thaddeus could not positively declare that the wily old general had had a hand in this latest venture—the message from Robert seemed perfectly plausible, and Nina had recognized the writing.

Deep down in his heart he believed Skoubekoff was

the wizard whose wand had somehow produced such results; but without actual proof he was wise enough not to accuse the Muscovite.

Now that he was with Nina, he could afford to let bygones pass; but something told him deep down in his heart the end was not yet—that Skoubekoff would never give up the game so long as he had a chance to come between; and hence it was with something like grim satisfaction that Thaddeus remembered his sword lessons in Vienna, believing the hour drew near when he must face the Russian foot to foot, and settle their rivalry with the weapon of a gentleman.

Long the lovers talked.

Plans were laid for the future, and Nina no longer had fears concerning what awaited her when the misty curtain was unrolled that hid the coming days.

His presence at her side brought new courage, for Thaddeus was cheery and optimistic, looking upon the future through the rose-tinted glasses of hope.

On the morrow preparations would be made for the journey eastward toward that point on the borders of Thessaly where the sons of King George were rallying the Greeks to check the mad advance of the Turkish hordes.

There she expected to find Robert—at least the letter he had left with the commandant of the fort and which Thaddeus had delivered thus informed her.



Railroads being a scarce article in Greece, they must depend upon a more primitive method of travel—either on horseback or by stage.

Possibly an escort might be furnished them, for the colonel was under heavy obligations to Thaddeus, and might be expected to do everything in his power to further his desires.

Finally the colonel made his appearance in tow of his good friend, the old salt. As it was essential that he should return to the fortifications in order to look after matters of importance, and being desirous of meeting the young woman whose adventures had aroused a deep interest in his mind, he had begged the mariner to break in upon the lover's *tête-à-tête* so that he might be introduced.

The vessel was going further up the bay, where she would be out of range, should the Prevesa forts throw a spare shell or two across the strait.

As the Austrian deputies intended to debark and accept the proffered hospitality of the Greek commandant, the same kind invitation was extended to Miss Sherwood, with promises of a comfortable room where there would be not the slightest danger of an unwelcome intruder in the shape of a hostile shell.

She hesitated—the prospect of feeling solid ground underfoot after so much tossing upon the bosom of the angry deep was very tempting.

Besides, they would wish to start in the morning from the fort.

She looked to Thaddeus, and his eager nod decided her.

"Can you give me ten minutes to finish packing?" she inquired.

The commandant acquiesced, though he knew he should really get ashore as speedily as possible.

So Nina called to Hawkins, who made her appearance, a woebegone maid indeed, ready to foreswear the delights of ocean travel forever after her fearful experiences on board the storm-tossed Trieste.

On deck Thaddeus chatted and waited.

He had made a great impression on the captain, who squeezed his hand at parting and wished him the very best of luck, while aside he bade him keep an eye to windward for squalls, and not to trust the suave old diplomat from St. Petersburg out of his sight.

Skoubekoff also went ashore.

He had made great friends of the Austrian officers, who knew him by reputation, and believed it a great honor to have his company.

Perhaps the wily diplomat had a method in thus cultivating their good will—he seldom put himself out to charm men or women but that he had some secret reason for it, some ax to grind.

They were all landed safely.

Thaddeus knew it was folly to attempt to conceal the nature of his feelings for Skoubekoff. He was built upon a different model from the Russian, who could smile and extend a hand to the man whom he was secretly plotting to ruin.

The guardsman simply ignored him—when he met Skoubekoff he either looked beyond him, or else gave the Russian a genuine English stare calculated to make his frozen blood boil with fury.

Fear was not a part of the guardsman's make-up, and believing that the issue between himself and Skoubekoff was one that could only be settled eventually with the sword, he wished to have the bout as soon as possible. When an imperative duty weighs upon the mind one desires to be rid of the burden, just as Sindbad yearned to shake off the Old Man of the Sea who had perched upon his shoulders.

And doubtless he would succeed, for the Russian was rapidly reaching that point where his natural ferocity inherited from Cossack ancestors would get the upper hand of his acquired suave diplomacy.

Hence, the day of reckoning between these rivals could not be very long delayed. When two dogs are eager to leap at one another's throat, the leash must be unusually strong that holds them back.

The Greek commandant kept his word and the young lady American traveler was supplied with com-

fortable apartments in his own sheltered domicile. At Thaddeus' suggestion a sentry was placed at the door, for the guardsman had grave suspicions concerning Skoubekoff. When a man could arrange such an ingenious scheme as he had attempted in Teheran, he may be set down as equal to anything.

No doubt Nina slept well that night, free from the dreadful heaving of the clamorous sea.

The guns of the fort had ceased their thunder—perhaps ammunition was scarce, or it might be the commandant deemed it policy to have daylight in which to utilize his shells to better purpose.

Occasionally a deep-toned growl from the men-of-war would be defiantly answered by the Prevesa redoubt; but, mellowed by distance, these sounds only served as a lullaby to the weary sleepers in the barracks of the Greek fort.

Day-dawn found all well; and with the rising of that April sun a new era opened in the fortunes of Thaddeus and Nina—memories of the past would soon be swallowed up in the quick-succeeding adventures which the future held in store for them.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## CAMPING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

THE dawning of a new day was greeted with infinite satisfaction by Thaddeus, who regarded the presence of that wonderful Russian as sufficient cause for anxiety. He seemed to be the incarnation of evil in the eyes of Nina's lover, equal to any rascality; and many times did the Briton admit in secret that he would never know peace again until the veteran of Plevna was occupying six feet of a hole in the ground.

There was plenty to occupy his attention on this morning.

A council of war was held with Sir Giles, Rory O'Shaughnessy, and the commandant, to whom the wishes of Miss Sherwood had been communicated.

Every imaginable feature of the case was brought forward and discussed, while upon his map of northern Greece, Thaddeus marked the course it would be necessary to take in order to reach the camps near Larissa.

It was a bold undertaking for the bravest of for-

eigners to plan, considering the excited condition of the country, and the commandant shook his head solemnly in disapproval at the very idea of a young and charming girl attempting so hazardous a journey.

Nina, who was of course present at the conference, would not hear of such a thing as delay. She was accustomed to horseback exercise and would laugh at the roughness of the road, for had she not passed through experiences among the mountains of Colorado and upon the plains of giant Texas, beside which any difficulties that could arise in *little ancient Greece* would appear as pygmies?

So she reasoned, woman-like.

Argument would be wasted in a case like this, and as wise men they confined their efforts to figuring out how best the affair might be carried through to a successful end.

Carefully the Greek officer marked out the difficulties of the route, so far as he knew of them.

It would be worth a great deal to be thus made aware of what they might expect.

Thaddeus left the arming of the party to Sir Giles, while Rory was to look after the provisions, a piece of business peculiarly agreeable to the Celt, who was always possessed of a keen appetite, as became a true soldier, and who had ever made it his boast that as a "forager" he had few superiors.

The guardsman was to see to the means of transportation.

At first they would have to ride on horseback, though later on it was hoped to secure some sort of a coach or stage in one of the mountain villages.

Several extra horses were to carry the tents, provisions, and a couple of camp cots for the gentler members of the party.

It was high noon when they left the fort, followed by the good wishes of the jolly commandant, who, clad in the panoply of war, had his men drawn up to do his guests all the honors.

Thaddeus saw Skoubekoff standing with an arm resting on a shining gun that thrust its grim muzzle through an embrasure of the sea wall.

There was nothing about the Russian to indicate any intention on his part to make a speedy departure. He even smiled and raised his *chapeau* in his usual courteous manner as Nina glanced in his direction, nor could she refuse to bow in return.

Apparently the Muscovite was in for a stay at the fort; but Thaddeus did not allow himself to be deceived.

He could have wagered that the two were fated to face each other again ere many days had passed. Something within told him that, and whether in camp or battle, in Greek village or among the wild defiles

of the mountains Thaddeus meant to be ready for this meeting when it occurred, since it seemed decreed that it would not be devoid of results.

The fleet had opened again with their guns, and the dull boom-boom, together with the cloud of smoke hanging over the water of the bay told that the engines of war were carrying out their appointed part of the task.

That was the stirring picture Thaddeus saw as, turning in the saddle, he took a last glance at the Greek redoubt, the smiling sea and the war scene in plain view across the strait.

It was after all his first experience in actual battle, where iron was thrown with deadly intent, and bursting bombs scattered their contents promiscuously about, seeking victims.

Soon all this was lost to view.

They had been given a guard of four Greek soldiers, who were to accompany them part of the way. Thaddeus expected, with the help of a letter given him by the commandant, to be easily able to hire a number of honest mountaineers about the time their guard would be forced to return.

In the happiness of the present he would not take any unnecessary worry over the future—it is all very well making preparations, but quite useless to cross a bridge until one comes to it.



Riding by the side of Nina, he found himself charmed by her conversation. To this rather staid Britisher her sparkling wit and sensible manner of looking at things appealed irresistibly, and every hour in her society found him deeper in love.

Sir Giles made himself very pleasant, and Nina took a great liking to the chivalrous baronet friend of her lover from the start.

She could read under his rather rapid exterior the sterling excellence and worth of the man, and knew that in an emergency he might be depended on as one trusts tempered steel.

They made a merry party—even the escort, provided with tobacco to their heart's content from the supply train, accepted the situation cheerfully, and according to their own way laughed and joked as they rode on. Thaddeus had promised each man a healthy reward should they carry out their part of the programme faithfully, and even patriotic Greeks have an itching palm for the gold and silver shekels of the world.

Thus night found them.

The air was crisp, the sky clear.

Snow could be seen on the mountain peaks in the distance, and under such conditions a fire was not only a comfort but a prime necessity.

Thaddeus had done some little hunting in his later years, since the advent of a fortune enabled him to

gratify many of the laudable desires natural to the heart of a man; and Sir Giles also knew something about the arrangement of a camp, so that between them all it was great sport.

The tents were placed in position, a couple of fires started, and preparations for supper soon underway.

Thaddeus was in supreme command.

Recognizing the soldier spirit in the guardsman, the Greek colonel had given his men who performed the office of guards strict directions to obey the Englishman implicitly, and under the circumstances they were quite willing to do so.

Thus Thaddeus established the camp under strict military discipline.

All were to have a share in the work of guarding against sudden attack—for while it was not supposed that the hostile Turks were anywhere in the vicinity, no one could say positively, and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Besides, there might be others—Greek brigands have not won such international renown as those of the Roman kingdom, but nevertheless travelers occasionally encounter them, and their experience has never been pleasant. When men fly in the face of the law to rob and hold for ransom, they are pretty much the same the world over, whether Greeks, Italians, refugees of the wild West, Arabs of the desert, or the

followers of the Kalifa in the Soudan. And they have to be treated with the same vigor, no matter under what sun they are met.

About the middle of the afternoon they had passed through a village south of the gulf, which the captain of the guard called Vonitza, and soon afterward mountain roads were encountered.

Their first camp was a success.

Nothing occurred to annoy them.

Of course the situation was new and strange, so that in all probability none of them slept soundly; but the detail was carried out to the letter, and worked charmingly.

Another day opened.

Thaddeus was up early, to scan the heavens, and rejoiced to see they were promised fair weather.

It meant much to those who rode on horseback, for once among the mountains, of which the interior of Greece is almost wholly composed, they would find difficulties enough without having a snowstorm or downpour of rain to add to it.

Luckily the leader of the guard had been over this part of the route before, and was able to give them much information concerning what might be expected.-

Thaddeus treasured up all he heard in his excellent memory.

Sooner or later he would utilize this knowledge, to their signal advantage.

Ere this day was over they expected to find themselves upon a fair mountain road that led north by east until the little town of Granitza was reached, where the horses could be handed over to the guard to return to Fort Punta, while our travelers made other arrangements to continue their forward movement, perhaps by diligence.

The start was made with the whole party in good spirits. Few persons had been met thus far, and all were friendly upon learning that the travelers were Greeks, either by birth or sentiment. Things did not remain so fair.

A short time after noon the sun disappeared behind a bank of clouds, which Thaddeus considered rather an ominous sign.

To be caught on those lonely and rough mountain roads with night and a storm in prospect did not offer an alluring future—little he cared for himself—as a soldier he could stand almost any hardship, but there was Nina, the thought of her under such conditions did not please him.

However, they were making good progress, and if fortune favored them might hope to reach the mountain town ere the downpour came.

Winter still lingered upon the mountains and both

the Greek and Turkish armies must have suffered severely while fighting around the famous passes on the border.

Another thing occurred that caused Thaddeus extreme annoyance, especially as he could see no remedy for it.

During the afternoon, when they were in one of the wildest regions as yet encountered, the distant report of a gun sounded and all of them plainly heard the peculiar zip-zip of a leaden messenger as it winged its flight close over their heads.

They even discovered a puff of smoke curling up from a clump of bushes far up the side of the elevation, and indignant at the outrage, Thaddeus sent several shots from his repeating rifle in that direction, in which he was followed by some of the others.

Whether or not this shower of lead found the target for which it was intended they could not say, but they heard no more from the fellow at any rate.

Such an occurrence worried the guardsman, since they could take no precautions that would prevent a dastardly bushwacker from carrying out his nefarious work.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE MAD GALLOP FOR SHELTER.

THEIR progress was not what Thaddeus might have wished, but there were times when the road ran down grade, and under these conditions they made a rattling pace.

Mlle. Chicago delighted her lover by the fine display of horsemanship which she exhibited, and Thaddeus was fain to admit that he had much to learn in this respect.

There were two of the party who hardly enjoyed this part of the programme.

Rory O'Shaughnessy had a vicious animal, and experienced many a narrow escape as they passed close to the edge of sheer descents. He vowed the beast had an unnatural hatred for the Irish race, and lived only to make an end of him. So whenever they approached one of these danger points the O'Shaughnessy was fain to throw his arms about the neck of the beast and hug him like a bear.

"Bedad, av one goes it must be both. Nothing

mortal shall make me lave go, be the powers. So av ye want to commit suicide I've nothing more to say," was the way he put it, and as the corrupt little beast seemed to desire longer life, they passed these precipices in safety.

Then there was Polly.

Hawkins had possibly never been upon a horse before in her life, and this was a rough start. She would never forget the experience—such joltings and scampering after the rest of the party, with her plump arms hugging the neck of her steed, and a gurgling scream bubbling forth from her red lips with every bound.

Thaddeus and Nina had much secret amusement looking back at such times and seeing the pair embracing their animals' necks with so much vigor, Polly screaming hysterically while Rory swore at and cajoled his mount in one breath.

At first Nina was distressed, but she realized that while the experience was rough it would be invaluable to the maid.

Besides, she knew Hawkins of old, and that her hysterical ways were for the most part assumed.

Then Thaddeus drew her attention to the fact that the gallant O'Shaughnessy was endeavoring between breaths, as it were, to condole with his companion in misery, and succeeding admirably.

"She is a flirt, is Hawkins, but I begin to believe Polly has succumbed at last, for she talks of nothing else than your Irish friend," laughed Nina.

"On my part I smell a very large rat—in other words it has dawned upon me why Rory was so eager to give up his lucrative position as captain of the shah's janizaries, and accompany me to Europe. He made out it was only his desire to see something of war, but by Jove, I'm of the opinion the little god had made him a prisoner, ransom or no ransom."

Thus they managed to extract some amusement out of the little scene that inevitably accompanied each dash down grade.

The afternoon wore away.

As yet the storm had not broken.

Thaddeus and Sir Giles had held a council of war with the captain of the guards who knew what manner of spring storm was apt to burst upon them on this April day, when it did finally come. Should they chance to be beyond striking distance of Granitza it must necessarily follow that the caravan come to a halt so the tents could be hastily pitched, and shelter given both to the feminine members of the expedition and the perishables in the shape of provisions.

There was little chance of meeting hostile Turks thus far from the border. At no time during the course of the short but fierce war was this western sec-



tion of Greece invaded—indeed, under masterly leaders the Greeks penetrated Epirus and threatened such Turkish strongholds as Janina.

Later on, as they entered Thessaly and approached the disputed regions around Trikala and Larissa, this danger would become a reality, since the roving Bashi Bazouks were spreading terror and dismay wherever their horses could carry them.

What was that—surely a large drop of rain.

“I’m afraid we are in for it,” said Thaddeus.

Sir Giles was of the same opinion.

The question arose, how far away was Granitza?

Upon appealing to the captain of the guard he said about a mile, and this determined them. Better risk a wetting and reach shelter than remain out on the bleak mountain side through a night of storm.

The road was nearly all a down grade and they could make a grand *coup* of it.

Alas! for Polly and the gallant O’Shaughnessy, they were not consulted in the matter at all. When the others led they were compelled to follow; and again arose that series of feminine shrieks, half of delight and half of alarm, mingled with masculine swear words (in the Persian tongue of course), honied appeals to the good nature of the beast, such as could only spring from lips that had kissed the blarney stone, and occasionally shouts of ludicrous fright as

the little demon of an animal executed some amazing *faux pas* that threatened to dislocate the neck of his rider as well as his own.

It was a great ride.

And the drops fell faster and faster.

They had gone a mile—two of them Thaddeus felt inclined to believe, and still the mountain town was conspicuous only by its absence.

One thing was certain, the captain of the guard had made a mistake—at the time his opinion was asked they had been further from Granitza than he declared was the case.

There was another possibility, and Thaddeus shrugged his shoulders when its ugly front presented itself before him—perhaps they would not bring up at Granitza at all—perhaps they were on the wrong road.

Such a thing lay within the range of chance, for several opportunities to make such a mistake had been open to them.

The prospect was anything but alluring—had he suspected such a thing before, Thaddeus would have decided to make camp and take their chances of a wetting under canvas; but since they were now soaked through, and the building of a fire must be next to impossible, the only thing for them to do was to keep on.

Hawkins was fast nearing the stage when she must go into genuine hysterics; and Rory, desirous of

assisting "the darlint," yet unable to loosen his death grip upon the neck of his steed, was raging in fury, uttering all manner of maledictions upon the beast.

Faster descended the rain.

Little they cared, since they could hardly be more thoroughly drenched if dipped in one of the rising mountain torrents.

This was a new source of anxiety. What if the road led across some little stream, upon reaching which they found further progress effectually cut off by a fearful torrent, rushing along at race horse speed.

Thaddeus was slow to anger, but whenever he glanced at the drenched figure of Nina near his side his spleen arose, and he felt that he would soon be in a mood to fall upon that wretched captain of the guard hip and thigh, and give him something to refresh his memory in the future.

He had protected Nina as best the circumstances allowed; but in spite of all, she was completely soaked and looked forlorn, though smiling bravely at him whenever she caught his troubled gaze.

"God bless her stout heart," Thaddeus said to himself time and again as he noted how she urged her horse on, and faced the pelting cold rain with a heroism he had never seen equaled by one of her sex.

His opinion of American girls had arisen fully one thousand per cent. since he knew Nina, and he no

longer wondered at the eagerness with which Englishmen sought them for wives—they combined rare qualities of mind and person that could seldom be found elsewhere.

Would this mad ride continue until one of the party went down? The maid's shrieking had become less and less violent, proving that her strength was fast failing; plainly something must be done to bring about a change.

What did Thaddeus hear as he raised his head and listened intently?

A roaring of water assailed his hearing—he felt a cold shudder pass over his frame. Then what he most feared had come to pass—just beyond was a torrent raging down the declivity, and it would be impossible for them to press through the flood.

Thaddeus suffered intense tortures during that moment of time.

The sound of rushing and whirling waters grew louder until it became a roar.

In another minute they would be upon the brink.

It seemed the part of caution to restrain this mad impetuous rush of their horses lest, perchance, unable to halt in time, they plunge into the boiling flood, to be carried away.

So discretion spoke to the guardsman, who put out a hand and caught the rein of Nina's horse. She too

had heard the Niagara-like roar and could readily guess what danger it foretold.

Sir Giles behind them was already frantically sawing at the mouth of his mount in order to weaken his gait.

And as they thus reduced their pace, two figures dashed past them at a mad gallop—it was Polly and the Irish soldier of fortune, still clinging desperately to the necks of their wild steeds now completely beyond control.

Thaddeus indeed made a clutch for one of them as they shot by, but failed to tally.

He would have urged his horse in hot pursuit, hoping to overtake the runaways ere they made the mad plunge into the torrent, but Nina, quick as a flash had seized his bridle, and her action declared as plainly as words that he could not take those chances without her company. That was love that spoke, and love is usually more or less selfish.

“Good heavens! they are lost!” cried the horrified guardsman, as he listened in the expectation of hearing the last shriek of those who had gone plunging on.

Something did reach his ears—something that was marvelously like the thud of horses’ hoofs upon wooden planks.

Thaddeus was electrified.

“There is a bridge over the torrent!” he shouted,

for what with the many voices around them it was not possible to be heard unless the voice was raised to the highest pitch.

“And see—lights through the darkness—we have reached Granitza at last!” came from the wretched captain of the guard.

It was true—all could see the gleam of lights through the gloom, and never did storm-tossed mariners sight port with more thankful hearts.

Now they too reached the bridge and the thunder of their horses' hoofs upon the planks momentarily drowned the roaring of the mountain torrent that boiled so furiously below. Another minute and they actually passed a cottage and found themselves inside the limits of a little Greek town.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## GOING TO THE FRONT.

IN the briefest possible time Thaddeus found a public inn where before a roaring fire he placed Mlle. Chicago. The brave little woman, though thoroughly drenched and shivering like an aspen leaf, while her teeth chattered like castanets in the hands of a Spanish gypsy dancer, endeavored to laugh gayly as though such an experience were after all something in the nature of a picnic; so that the guardsman felt an almost uncontrollable desire to take her in his arms and smother her with kisses.

Hawkins had by this time appeared, escorted by Rory, their runaway steeds having come to a voluntary stop when within striking distance of some tumble-down sheds where possibly on some past occasion they had been doled out a meager allowance of oats.

The cheerful blaze soon chased away their benumbed feeling, and Thaddeus insisted that every member of the party should partake of a hot bowl of toddy which, at his direction, the obsequious tavern keeper served. Even Nina and her maid had to thus fortify themselves

against possible grievous results from the cold drenching received.

As for Rory, the solemn warning seemed to make such an impression upon him that he renewed the covenant with the punch bowl times without number, proving that he had no idea of giving pneumonia the slightest chance to claim him for a victim.

The inn keeper had a wife and grown daughters who presently took charge of Nina and Hawkins, and later on when they appeared for supper it was in the garb of Greek peasant girls.

Mlle. Chicago blushed a little to be seen in such an abbreviated dress by the man she loved, but in these days of bicycle and golf, girls are in a measure becoming less prudish about such trifles; and surely in all Acarnania or Trikala no more handsome Greek girl could be found than this maid of Athens.

Now they grew merry—the discomforts of the past fade from the mind so easily when we are enjoying the delightful pleasures of the present.

Even the future began to look bright when at a table heaped with appetizing viands they broke their fast.

Thaddeus forgot how within the hour he had been growling that it would give him great satisfaction to punch the captain of the guard's head because he had brought such troubles upon them through his wretched blunder.



And the O'Shaughnessy, cheered by his many introductions to the punch bowl previously mentioned—as well as by the fact that their journey from this point would undoubtedly be by diligence or stage—became quite jolly as the meal proceeded, insisting on humorously describing how the “ugly divil av a crature” took the bit into his teeth and played fast and loose with the Irish “gintleman who honored him with a sate upon his back.”

Later on Rory also insisted upon showing the Greeks present how an Irish jig could be danced, and when Thaddeus retired he was still kicking a foot to the amusement of the guests who looked upon the captain of the shah's janizaries as a curiosity seen only once in a lifetime. Rory made many friends in that tavern—he also made quite a hole in his pocketbook, for drachmas were constantly flowing in payment for the drinks he insisted they should take with him.

In the morning Thaddeus rejoiced to find that no one was any the worse for the exposure. The O'Shaughnessy's head looked a trifle swollen, and he was unusually quiet; but Thaddeus could give a good guess as to the cause—of course it was lack of sleep—late hours must make any man feel out of humor and impair even a loquacity acquired at the kissing stone of Blarney Castle.

Sir Giles proved an invaluable ally, and it was

through him they finally procured a diligence with four horses and a driver, which in payment of certain sums in hand and to come at various points along the road, was to take them into Thessaly, to Trikala if possible, with Larissa as a dim objective.

With a grand flourish they set out.

The Greek guard was to return with the horses.

Thaddeus had been liberal with them, and Sir Giles made it a point to duplicate what the other had given, so that taken in all they fared splendidly.

In this humor they cheered the departing coach most heartily as, leaving the mountain town it started northward toward the region where the guns of Moslem and Greek were thundering out mortal defiance—where the descendants of the immortal Leonidas again defended the mountain passes with some of that same old deathless bravery.

The weather was fair once more, and while some difficulty might be experienced in fording a few of the streams to be encountered, the general opinion of those who were capable of knowing had been that nothing formidable might be expected, provided more rain did not descend.

Thaddeus took an inventory of the party and their equipments, naturally beginning with the vehicle.

The diligence was antiquated, as might have been expected, and such as can be found in various parts of

Greece and Turkey, where railroads are scarce, and primitive methods must remain in vogue for many years to come, especially in the line of transportation over the mountainous districts.

Before the strange journey reached its legitimate conclusion they might have occasion to resort to the arbitrament of arms; so Thaddeus, always conservative and looking to possible difficulties, called for a showing of weapons. He had talked it over with Nina, and knew full well the mere mention of possible warfare would not cause her cheeks to pale.

The result was fairly encouraging, at least considering under what circumstances and surroundings the assortment had been picked up.

Thaddeus had been extremely lucky in securing an American repeating rifle that had drifted to Greece in some way, and did not seem to be fully appreciated; but to a sportsman who knew the value of such a weapon it was a treasure, and our guardsman considered himself extremely fortunate in running across and securing it.

Sir Giles had a revolver, while Rory had been obliged to secure a make-shift, and the two ancient pistols which he thrust into the sash that girdled his waist were curiosities indeed! but Rory declared they had the power back of them, and since he had experimented numerous times surely he ought to know.

And even Mlle. Chicago was not unarmed.

At first Thaddeus had been horrified to discover that Nina made a practice of carrying a lovely little revolver—she put the matter to him in such a practical common-sense way that in the end he considered it the most reasonable thing in the world that she should do so, surrounded as she was by peril in passing through the semi-barbarous countries of the Old World.

Thus they were in a position to give any would-be assailants a hot reception.

Still Thaddeus kept before his mind the very important advice which the commandant at the fort had given him—never to relax his vigilance at any moment, for if trouble came at all that was the very time it could be expected.

The diligence was not the most luxurious vehicle to ride in they would have chosen.

It might have been worse, and retained some traces of bygone splendor.

As for the roads, they were absolutely shocking in the eyes of one accustomed to the smooth travel of Old England.

Never mind—one can smile at such things when in a strange land. At home the same experience would speedily call out the most vigorous protests.

They found much to be merry over.

Sometimes the jolting was so severe that it was im-

possible to retain their seats, and such was the jumble that Jasper and Sir Giles had to serve as buffers in order that the feminine passengers might not be injured.

This gave the guardsman an idea, and presently Nina and Hawkins were installed in the rear seat, so well tucked in with blankets and rugs that the most severe jolting, outside of an actual breakdown, could not dislodge them.

Indeed, Nina declared she felt like an Esquimau, and Thaddeus whispered that she was by long odds the prettiest Esquimau he had ever heard of, at which she shook her finger at him with a mock frown, but was apparently not *very* angry.

Of course the gentlemen, having no means of tucking themselves in, all the rugs being exhausted, had a tremendous time of it between themselves.

The mountain air was quite chilly, but they did not suffer from cold a particle.

That wonderful coach with ancient springs kept them on the jump—had they been engaged in a boxing bout they could hardly have heated up their blood more freely.

Now they were holding on to the straps for grim life—anon they wrestled in one or the other of the corners, and perhaps had hardly extricated themselves from this mess before a sudden lurch of the vehicle,

as a wheel went down into a hole, sent them waltzing toward each other.

It was very funny indeed.

The gentlemen bore their honors meekly, and roared with laughter, while Nina and Hawkins at times fairly shrieked.

And Rory—well, he was having a little picnic all to himself on the outside.

They could hear him scrambling about over the flat top of the diligence as though bound to cover it all. Once he even fell over into the receptacle for trunks in the rear, and finding this more to his taste, ensconced himself there, since he was now able to brace himself against the unexpected and violent lurchings of the coach.

Rory could never keep still very long, and as it happened some of the calls he made were exceedingly appropriate to the scene within, where the two gentlemen were bobbing and swaying back and forth in the most fantastic manner.

Rory likened the experience to a square dance, and his sonorous voice could be heard bawling:

“Bow to your partners—all hands round—sashay till the lift—ladies chain—salute,” and so on.

Of course such things may excite hilarious laughter for a time, but ere the day was over it had become an old story, and the first chance that presented itself

Thaddeus and Sir Giles made sure to purchase some additional blankets with which they padded certain sharp corners of the coach's interior, the impression of which had been stamped upon various portions of their anatomy times without number.

The O'Shaughnessy saw this move and went it one better, securing two blankets, in which he rolled himself, and thus insured against buffetings, lay in the rear boot of the diligence like a Turk, smoking his pipe, singing or taking naps in turn.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### BY DILIGENCE THROUGH THESSALY.

THAT was a day worth remembering.

Such difficulties had to be overcome that it was late in the afternoon when they reached Vresthanitsa. It was determined to pass the night here, because the accommodations were at least fair.

They found themselves in the mountainous region of Thessaly.

No sane Turkish general would ever attempt to invade Greece from the northwest, while in the east lay the fertile plains of Thessaly. From time immemorial all hostile incursions have sought to reach Athens by this latter path.

Already they could see more signs of war in the air. The people were neglecting their ordinary farm duties—men were arming and going to the front, eager to strike a blow for the fatherland and against the hated Turk.

Thaddeus felt the soldier spirit thrill within him at the sight—he was like a war-horse that scents the bat-



the smoke afar off. Long had he desired to participate in actual hostilities, and it began to look as though his dream would come true.

When another morning came they expected to set out once more in the same diligence. By making a very early start there was some hope that ere night descended they might bring up at the town of Phanari. This lies upon the railroad, not many miles from Trikala, and they would thus have the choice of heading for this town, or by taking a round-robin sweep in the direction of Volo reach Larissa *and the front*.

Thaddeus was greatly interested in what was going on in the Greek town that night.

Intense excitement reigned. In imagination one could hear the heavy guns of the invading Turks, together with the fierce war-cries of the merciless Bashi Bazouks as they swept down upon some Hellenic village.

There was no alarm, but the fires of patriotism burned high. Old men made eloquent speeches and recalled the gallant deeds which had made their ancestors famous in the good days of yore. That spirit still lived, and could be aroused to fever heat by an appeal to their love for the fatherland.

Alas! in these degenerate days it is not always the right that conquers, but that nation wise enough to prepare for war—which has laid in great supplies, the

latest arms and has a well drilled army. The patriotism of the modern Greeks has never been questioned, but ere they plunge into another war they should take care to supplement this with modern arms and a well stocked commissary.

The days of Thermopylæ can never return, since the world has advanced much in the centuries that have flown.

Greece cannot live upon the heroism shown by her noble sons in those ancient times, but must be up and doing in the race of nations, if she ever hopes to win back Macedonia and round out her old-time empire.

Thaddeus was thrilled by these sights.

The sound of martial music always touches a soldier's heart, and he wandered from one fire to another, taking in the whole show. Once he was called upon for an address, and although not ordinarily an orator he felt bound to utter some of the sentiments with which his heart abounded.

So he spoke, telling them where the sympathy of all Christian people lay, and that while for serious diplomatic reasons the government of England could not come boldly to their assistance, the people themselves were unreservedly on their side, and he himself was even then on his way to the front to offer his sword to the Crown Prince Constantin.

All of which being duly translated to the crowd, aroused tremendous enthusiasm.

Everything gave evidence of the war spirit.

Nothing else was talked about.

News had been received of serious fighting.

Whether the small but heroic Greek army would be able to hold the fierce Turks, outnumbering them two or three to one, in check, was a question that caused an immense variety of opinions. Some pessimists looked only at the black side of the case, and prophesied that soon Edhem Pasha and his victorious army would have overrun the whole of Thessaly, and make ready to advance on Athens, in spite of Europe's frowns. That must be a black day for poor Greece when the hated Turk set foot in their historic capital.

Other optimists declared the fleet would bombard and capture Salonica, and with his base of supplies cut off, the valorous Edhem Pasha must eventually surrender or disband his army. Then the fleet would force the Dardanelles and threaten Constantinople itself.

Great things were expected of this Greek fleet.

Alas! that in some strange manner it never even attempted to fulfill the grand projects which all friends of Greece marked out for it as the one great opportunity to strike a deadly blow at their foes. The fleet hung around Volo and apparently only existed to give

the Greek army backbone when they were forced by superior numbers to the shores of the bay. Some one had blundered, as usual, and the one grand opportunity for a *coup* was lost—with Salonica fallen Greece might have made peace with honor and increased territory. Every one knows the actual facts and how dearly she paid for this inaction of her war vessels.

Their sleep was often broken by the crash of guns and the excited shouts of the volunteers forming to march over the mountains in order to be in the fight.

When morning came they welcomed the dawn gladly. A very early breakfast was eaten.

Then they entered the diligence with considerable misgiving, and resigned themselves to the tortures of another day's ride.

Thaddeus examined the coach with some curiosity, much as one might pick up the dentist's forceps. He found everything in good condition, and realized that the vehicle had been made for rough service upon these mountain roads. An ordinary up-to-date tallyho would have been wrecked, no doubt, in a short time.

No one was sorry to see the last of Vresthenitsa in the gray light of early morning.

The young Greeks were already mustering with the intention of starting on foot to the front. Stalwart, valiant fellows they were in the main, and Thaddeus did not doubt but that they would give a good account

of themselves when the first clash with the Moslem foe came.

They had a long day's ride before them.

A worse country lay between them and the railroad than any experienced up to this time. Only the very wind up of the day's journey would be over the plains of Thessaly. That consolation dangled before their mental vision, and gave great encouragement.

Of course this day was a repetition of the previous one, only "a little more so," as the O'Shaughnessy said.

As no convenient hamlet showed up at noon, they were obliged to depend upon their own resources.

Fortunately Rory, to whom all this had been intrusted, had not proved derelict to his duty. While the horses rested the passengers alighted.

They were in a valley, surrounded by rugged hills. Not a human habitation could be seen.

All was as wild as in a country never settled by civilized people. It was hard to believe this could be Greece, whose history dated back thousands of years. Perhaps once this valley was the scene of industry, these hillside covered with vineyards or orchards, but a wild growth had blotted out every sign. The glory of Greece lies in her past.

Here in this desolate domain, haunted now only by the memories of past centuries, our little band of ad-

venturous travelers built a roaring fire and actually cooked a fair dinner.

It was very much like a picnic.

Miss Nina enjoyed it extremely, and was lavish in her flattery concerning those who were instrumental in bringing about this success.

Hawkins proved non-committal—for the life of her the English maid failed to understand what some folks could see in this gypsy method of “feeding”—for herself she was satisfied with civilized rations at hotels, and would be very grateful when her dear mistress exhausted the spirit of adventure that seemed to animate her.

All of which was of course secretly confided to the captain of janizaries.

Then forward again.

It would be monotonous relating their little adventures and mishaps—in telling how Thaddeus and Sir Giles came to prefer walking up some of the hills in order to stretch their legs, and how poor Rory was bounced out of his pocket while they were on the jump down a declivity and only saved from severe injuries by the padding of his dual blanket; together with numerous other mishaps.

Nothing very serious occurred—the stage did not break down, neither did the four horses attempt to run away with them. Indeed, after the day was two-

thirds over it required almost constant whipping to induce the weary animals to do their duty.

Thaddeus, who kept in touch with the driver and frequently referred to his map, told them they were making fair progress.

They found that, owing to the wretched condition of the roads, and the lack of motive power, they would not be able to reach their destination at dark.

Rather than risk going on in the gloom, it was decided to make a halt, cook supper and take a much-needed rest.

Then, when the moon had climbed well up into the clear heavens, another start could be made. All of which showed considerable wisdom on the part of the two gentlemen, who worked together in full sympathy on every subject.

This arrangement was carried out, only as they reached the town of Korona, about 3 o'clock, where a road from the south joined that from the west, it was determined to make the next town by nightfall.

By an unusual exercise of the whip, and some especial inducement offered the horses in the shape of lessening their load up the hills, this was actually accomplished, and supper was eaten at an inn, the best the town afforded.

Thaddeus figured as to the hour, and when at 11 he had them once more enter the diligence, the fair

queen of night was sailing in the eastern heavens, looking down upon the armed camps of patriotic Greek and fierce Moslem, doubtless sleeping on their arms after the day's deadly struggle, and ready to renew it on the morrow.

All went well—the riding was comfortable now, and in due time they were electrified to actually see a train of cars moving to the east, doubtless filled with Greek volunteers being hurried to the aid of the sorely pressed crown prince.

Then before them lay Phanari, not asleep as usual at this hour after midnight, but bustling with excitement and martial sounds, for not many miles away the roar of battle echoed in the land.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## WHERE GREEK MET TURK IN A DEATH GRAPPLE.

By this time our friends were growing somewhat accustomed to clamorous nights. After a certain amount of experience one could probably sleep quite comfortably in a boiler factory. There is nothing like getting used to such things—familiarity breeds contempt in this as in other matters.

So, in spite of the warlike sounds to be heard in these towns of Thessaly, day and night, they managed to obtain some refreshing sleep.

In the morning Thaddeus sought information.

Larissa was Nina's objective point, for Robert had gone to serve under the crown prince—his valiant spirit desired to be where the fighting was fiercest, and where a speedy blow might be struck for the land that gave his mother birth.

True, Trikala was near at hand, and from there across the plains to Larissa it was not forty miles—the journey could be made in a day with a good team, under ordinary conditions.

That was where the rub came in—the present conditions were most extraordinary.

Not for many many years had a foreign foe set foot on Grecian soil, to cause the blood of her loyal sons to boil. Between Larissa and Trikala doubtless the country was overrun with bands of guerrillas from both sides. Nothing could be more hazardous than a day's journey in that region.

As a soldier Thaddeus would have undertaken it without hesitation, providing he had good horses and a small Greek escort, for the gallop would be apt to yield great results, and in no other way could one so readily learn what were the tactics of the rival hosts.

With Miss Sherwood under his charge the case assumed another phase entirely.

Knowing her fearless nature by this time he did not dare put the question to her, but decided it on the basis of the authority she had given him as her deputy in the matter.

To Larissa they would go, but by rail.

There was a distance of at least eighty miles to cover in rounding the loop that took them down near the gulf of Volo, but that was quite a small matter when on the track of a railway.

To his secret gratification Nina made no objection. He trembled lest she ask to see the war map, and note the shorter route.

A train was making up to go to Larissa where all the men who could be armed were needed to stand up against Edhem's seasoned soldiers, many of them veterans of the war with Russia.

Thaddeus might have found considerable difficulty in securing permission to travel upon this military train only for the very cordial letter he carried to the Greek commander from the colonel in charge of Fort Punta.

The government, as is usual in such a crisis, had seized upon every railway and vehicle of transportation in order to get supplies and reinforcements to the front where the hardy Greeks were already suffering privations from the cold weather and the lack of provisions. At such times the beauty of a well organized commissary department speaks eloquently, and very often this necessary adjunct of an army is as strong a factor in bringing about victory as the valor of the rank and file.

The scene was striking as the train drew out, with hoarse shouts from the gathered crowd, and answering cheers from the volunteers in the long line of box-like carriages and open freight vans, for all manner of vehicles had to be utilized at such a time as this.

Greece never knew such a thrilling occasion.

It is to be fervently hoped that the next time it occurs those in charge will be more careful to have

certain matters better arranged, and her stocks of torpedoes in a condition to do damage.

All along the line there was the same enthusiasm shown—whenever they passed through town or hamlet the assembled crowd cheered, and shouted encouragement.

In one place our friends were deeply interested in witnessing the embarkation of a fresh company of patriots, and in seeing the ceremony of "blessing the colors," performed by a priest of the Greek church.

Everywhere the men were enlisting to meet the invader, and sweethearts, wives, and mothers sent them forward with kisses delivered publicly. None but a coward could hold back, now that the foot of the relentless and unspeakable Turk pressed the sacred soil of the fatherland.

Thaddeus wondered many times what would be the eventual outcome.

Knowing the remarkable resources of the Turkish nation, bolstered up by the Powers for years, as the keystone to the arch of Europe's peace, he realized that she could throw an overwhelming army across the border. The only question then was whether these Grecians, inspired by patriotism, could so inflame their zeal that nothing human might resist them? Thaddeus desired such a result, but he feared it was not to be the outcome of the war.

Though their progress was often delayed by various obstacles, they gradually rounded the loop and were headed due northwest, with Kara Dagh looming up on the left.

Now their nerves began to tingle in earnest.

Ere long they might even expect to hear the distant but positive growl that told of field batteries in deadly duel—to see a train bearing the wounded back from the front, for daily were the armies on the frontier engaged in a death grapple.

Over this historic ground they pushed, whenever the road was open.

To go less than one hundred miles between sunrise and darkness would be considered a wretched display of enterprise on the part of any modern railroad, but in time of war, and choked as the single line was with traffic, not to mention the demoralization of the country at the possible and probable advent of the merciless Bashi Bazouk, such delay is not at all surprising.

Thaddeus might chafe at the slow progress, but when he and Sir Giles considered matters they were forced to admit that it was extremely fortunate that they were given a chance to gain the front at all.

Larissa was reached at dusk.

Such sights as were beheld here—surely they must have disheartened an English or German field officer,

accustomed to system and the observance of strict order whether in attack or retreat.

The guardsman looked on with dismay, and deep down in his heart realized the fact that this utter lack of discipline would be the main cause for the defeat of the Greeks in the end. United, under strict orders, and with their splendid courage they might have hoped to hold the foe in check, but such disorder as this was simply disheartening, to say the least. Thaddeus was rather inclined to call it criminal. His first thought indeed, was to the effect that the Grecian forces were retreating, and that the backward movement had some of the conditions of a rout. Later on he found to his relief, that this was only partly true, for while the crown prince was undoubtedly forced backward to Larissa, and finally compelled to abandon this coign of advantage to the victorious Turks, there was really no time when his little army did not face the foe, and doggedly dispute every yard of territory.

Of course Thaddeus' first move was to relieve the suspense of Nina as soon as possible.

He set out to learn if Robert Sherwood were in or near Larissa, or at the front, for they had as yet not reached the fighting line, which was still in the mountains.

It was not long before he became aware of the fact

that he had undertaken a Herculean task in attempting this.

It was night, and Larissa was in a turmoil of confusion, crowded with officers and volunteers, apparently detached, and with but a faint knowledge as to what they were to do in order to strike a blow for the sacred cause.

Then strings of wounded were arriving every little while, showing the extreme ferocity of the struggle in front, where Greek met Turk face to face on the mountain side, and engaged in a hand to hand struggle.

The guardsman made many inquiries, but he failed to discover the object of his search.

Some glimmer of the facts came to him, and when he finally returned to Nina he was able to state that there could be little doubt as to her brother's being in the vicinity, since he had received glowing accounts of a young American who answered Robert's description.

This party was found wherever the battle raged fiercest—he had taken part in the desperate defense of Milouna Pass, and been signally and personally complimented by the young crown prince, who was receiving his own first baptism of fire at the same time, with a bravery that must surely endear him to the hearts of the Greek people in time to come.

Unfortunately the Greek troops were led for the

most part by young officers, whose impulse often brought disaster upon the cause; while on the other hand the Turks had seasoned leaders, quite in their element, and quick to take advantage of the least mistake.

They met with only one genuine rebuff in their later progress after taking the mountain passes, and this was administered by brave Smolenitz, the heroic figure of the whole war, who came within an ace of winning a great victory when he held his division with such firmness that the whole Turkish army broke upon it time and again, as the incoming billows break upon a rock.

Had there been a few more generals of his caliber, the end would have been crowned with glory. Another time different tactics will produce better results. One would be foolish to expect the crown prince, unseasoned in war and fresh from the luxuries of the palace, to stand up against such veterans in warfare as Edhem Pasha, than whom few greater generals have lived. At least King George's sons proved their bravery—they would not remain at Athens while the soldiers of Greece underwent privations on the frontier.

Mlle. Chicago was forced to be satisfied with Thaddeus' report.

All she could do was to wait—sooner or later the chance would come for her to see Robert.



Meanwhile she could be making herself useful as a hospital nurse.

Her services were eagerly accepted.

There was a small band of these devoted women at work in the temporary hospitals; some of them nurses with the Red Cross upon their sleeve, having come from England or America, and in their company this young woman commenced her work of mercy that very night.

She was not entirely ignorant of the principles, for at one time she had been on the point of devoting her life to the duty of a professional nurse, being inclined to work for others, as well as giving of her means to aid in the fight against the foes of mankind. Although this idea died out when she began to enjoy the delights of travel, still its fruits were apparent in this emergency.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### PRINCE CONSTANTIN ABANDONS LARISSA.

THE inquiries which Thaddeus had instituted seemed to point to the fact that Larissa was really being abandoned in favor of Pharsalia, on the second line of defense, some twenty miles away.

Such a move would be strategic.

Larissa, situated on the open plain offered wretched opportunities for effective defense; while Pharsalia was back by rugged hills where the Greek artillery could be planted to mow down their Moslem foes as they advanced.

The certainty of this thing annoyed Thaddeus.

What would become of Nina in the panic that must follow the flight from Larissa?

He shuddered to even think of these two girls being left behind to the mercy of the Bashi Bazouks. Women have never been deemed sacred in the eyes of these harem keepers, who purchase their wives as other men do their horses. Few among them have the instincts of chivalry—it runs not in the blood. The massacres

of Armenians have cast a new and black reproach upon the name of the Moslem, which time will never wipe out.

In Crete they had a different class of people to deal with, nor did little Greece hesitate to draw the sword in defense of her own.

Through the night Thaddeus was much upon the streets.

Indeed, there was little sleep for any one, with stores being hauled through the town and in the direction of Pharsalos, regiments going and coming, artillery dashing madly hither and yon, cheers and cries of all kinds making the welkin ring, and beyond it all a far away pulsating sound similar to a mighty hammer striking the anvil—a sound that every one knew meant the line of battle being forced back upon Larissa, and the Turkish host within striking distance of the town.

Pandemonium had begun to reign since the official order to abandon Larissa was promulgated.

Thaddeus could easily imagine the scene.

He had done one wise thing, already agreed upon with Sir Giles—purchased some horses which were left in charge of a citizen, who, fearing that he would be compelled to forfeit them to the government, or allow seizure by the Turks, was only too delighted to receive pay for the animals and assume charge of them with the risk placed on another party's shoulders.

As for the O'Shaughnessy, he was that eager for the fray, like a true Irishman spoiling for a fight, that they had hardly struck Larissa before he had attached himself to a regiment of impetuous volunteers, and was off for the front.

Doubtless ere the rising of the sun above the top of Mount Ossa to the north of east, the captain of the shah's janizaries would be given an opportunity to meet Mr. Turk in battle.

War was a trade with him.

He knew little else save the jingling of sabers and the manual of the drill.

The world is full of such soldiers of fortune, ready to flock to the scene of hostilities as vultures gather around a carrion; and with a well-filled treasury any nation can recruit a battalion or foreign legion of the greatest fighters on earth.

The only serious trouble would lie in the fact that they are nearly one and all officers.

At last the night gave way unwillingly to day. It was to be one marked with a black cross upon the annals of Grecian history—a day of national humiliation.

No one would ever refer to it as worthy of being commemorated—never would joyous sounds arise on the anniversary of Saturday, the 24th day of April.

Larissa was to be abandoned.

The fiat had gone forth.

A desperate battle fought at Mati lasting for six hours on the preceding day was the main cause of this order.

At first the Greeks had been successful, whereupon reinforcements were hurried forward by Edhem Pasha until an overwhelming force compelled Constantin to doggedly retreat.

A council of war followed, at which it was decided that the time had come to retire to the second line at Pharsalos, where the Chassidiari mountain chain offered a barrier which could be defended with good hope of success by the Greek troops.

There was one weak place.

Volo the seaport on the gulf, and the terminus of the railroad, had been their base of supplies.

Edhem Pasha was desirous of capturing this place before being superseded in command by the old hero who had defied the Russians at Plevna, Ghazi Osman, the greatest of Turkish pashas, then on his way to take immediate charge of affairs, since the Sublime Porte had begun to lose faith in Edhem, after the advance of the Turks proved anything but the walk-over to Athens anticipated.

The gunboats might defend the port to some extent, but to Smolenitz was given the rôle of honor.

It could not have been in better hands.

His brigade was fated to pluck laurels from the wreath of defeat, and in history write in imperishable characters the one heroic deed of the whole war.

Late in the afternoon of the 24th, at about the time our friends struck Larissa, the Turkish advance was really in sight of the town.

An advance was not deemed wise that night because of the uncertainty attached to such an act; but another sun would not go down ere the Turks would have occupied Larissa.

Thaddeus had come here to fight, but to his disgust he found no opportunity.

Everything was in confusion—people were fleeing from the town—had been all night it seemed. The dreadful Bashi Bazouks were near, and apt to dash in at any hour, when the thin line of defense had been swept aside.

From all accounts these bold riders were equal to the Russian Cossacks—whenever any daring deed was in contemplation they were called upon to head the movement, and usually acquitted themselves with great credit, being destitute of fear.

At the same time they were deemed as merciless as any semi-detached guerrillas, and good people shivered at the mention of their name—the wives and mothers of Thessaly had from time immemorial been in the habit of forcing obedience from their children under

the threat that the Bashi Bazouks would get them if they were not careful.

And now these fabled monsters hovered over the dovecote—the time had come for them to strike. No wonder there was a great fluttering within, and a wild stampede of all who could take flight.

Thaddeus had argued with his betrothed, but it was not until Nina saw the actual panic in the early morning that she agreed to leave Larissa while there was still time.

Accordingly the gentlemen went for the horses.

Fortune was kind.

They reached the home of the Greek gentleman from whom Thaddeus had purchased the animals and in whose charge they were left.

The streets in some quarters were impassable with broken down artillery, household goods abandoned, vehicles stuck in the jam and adding to the confusion, Greek soldiers separated from their commands, some of them drunk, or engaged in looting the stores and shops, even the dwellings not escaping the general search for valuables.

Such sights invariably accompany the abandonment of a town to the foe, unless the commanding general remains to the last and guards the people.

Thaddeus saw all these things with a frown.

It was a wretched introduction to the grim features

of war when he had expected to see the hostile armies drawn up in battle array, to hear the inspiring music that sent them crashing together with the roll of musketry and deep thunder of artillery, as regiments plunged into the fray to win glory or death.

Sir Giles was the first to discover that something was wrong at their destination.

Men were in the house sacking it—their coarse shouts could be heard welling from the open windows and doors. Liberty had become license—the hangers-on of the army looked upon this as their heaven-sent opportunity to make hay while the sun shone. Presently the enemy would occupy the town, and surely it were better that friends profited by the loot than the common foe. That was the principle upon which they worked. It is easy to find an excuse under any and all circumstances.

There now arose anxiety about the horses.

Had they been stolen?

Such animals were worth a mint of money in a time of panic like this.

Thaddeus not only quickened his pace, but broke into his run, determined that if the beasts had not as yet been taken away he would have something to say on the subject.

At his side ran the baronet, equally concerned and ready to sneeze when Thaddeus took snuff.



Thus they burst into the house.

Several men were rushing from room to room seeking valuables. These vandals cared little what destruction they wrought under the plea that in so doing they were preventing the coming possessors of Larissa from so much creature comforts.

They paid little heed to the entrance of the two Englishmen, doubtless deeming them only another variety of pillagers.

Men engaged in such unholy work are nearly always inspired by a species of fraternal regard toward one another; especially is this brotherhood manifested in the face of a common foe. It need hardly be added that they are as a usual thing rank cowards at heart, since that goes for granted.

Our friends scarcely noticed the looting of the domicile. Through the house they passed quickly. The stable in the rear was where their interest centered at present, and once beyond the threshold they learned how fortunate had been their arrival upon the scene.

Men were bringing forth the horses— *their* horses, since Thaddeus had parted with a small fortune in liquidation of the settlement.

These steeds already saddled, two of them for female riding, were hardly objects that would have aroused enthusiasm at Epsom or the Grand Prix. Indeed, an

Arab would have almost expired with dismay at the idea of possessing such scarecrows.

Just at this moment of panic they assumed noble and peerless proportions in the eyes of those who dreaded the swoop of the Bashi Bazouk worse than a Bedouin does that of the desert sirocco.

At any rate, good, bad or indifferent, Thaddeus claimed the absolute ownership of the beasts, and he belonged to a sturdy race always unwilling to let any affair go by default.

From all appearances there would speedily be music in the air when these Britons attempted to claim their own, for those who led the animals out of the stable were swarthy fellows, possibly deserters from Constantin's army of Thessaly, who believed they had struck a bonanza in this discovery, and would doubtless prove unwilling to hand over their gold mine to the first pair of foreigners chancing to come upon the scene, and in need of a mount.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## WITH THE SECOND LINE OF DEFENCE.

WITHOUT the slightest hesitation our friends advanced directly toward the spot where the others were joyously examining their prizes, making merry over the ladies' saddles which two of the forlorn quadrupeds carried.

There was such a conglomeration of sounds from every quarter that one must have been irresistibly reminded of the Tower of Babel.

These various noises had the effect of spurring a laggard on to action—there seemed to be a species of electricity in the ozone that allowed no person to escape.

Thus, without warning, Thaddeus and Sir Giles bore down upon the looters, and threw their castors into the arena.

The guardsman being first had the earliest opportunity to show his hand.

He gave the horse thief not only a chance to see it but feel its weight besides, for coming thus unan-

nounced upon the fellow he hurled him to one side with scarcely an effort of his strong arm.

Sir Giles struck straight from the shoulder in a style possibly picked up at Rugby and Cambridge, and his man went down instantan.

"These horses belong to me, and I shall defend them if I have to shoot down every rogue of you!" was what Thaddeus roared.

Possibly they were not linguists, and could not understand one word that was spoken; but they did comprehend the significant actions preceding and accompanying this brief speech.

Both Britons had drawn guns and these they immediately pointed at the other two fellows who still clung to the bridles of the captured steeds as though loath to give them up.

It was amusing to see them duck their heads and at the same time endeavor to retain their grasp upon those precious bridles.

"Let loose!" said Thaddeus, in an awful voice.

This seemed to be the signal for a general advance, as though the ruffians by unanimous agreement were resolved to make a bold bid for the fruits of their foray.

There was no escape from an encounter—all else having failed Thaddeus realized that severe measures must now be employed.

Averse to taking human life except in the heat of battle, when he discharged his revolver it was with the intention of crippling one of his antagonists.

Singularly enough this humane idea also presented itself to the mind of Sir Giles, so that the muzzles of their weapons were mutually depressed at the time of the discharge.

Neither stopped at the first shot, since their enemies had already shown naked weapons and the disposition to use them.

There was a lively little scene for a minute or so, with the "thoroughbred" nags prancing and actually showing some signs of fire, since "blood will tell."

Thaddeus had a lofty contempt for such riff-raff as these low looters, though readily understanding how dangerous they might become if allowed to gather their comrades in arms.

As quickly as the quartette, shouting and cursing in the original Greek, stumbled and ran, bleeding as they were, in the direction of the house, he knew the time had come to depart hence, ere they could rally their comrades.

Accordingly each of them threw a leg across a saddle and secured a second horse by the bridle.

There was a way open to the street, a door in the wall surrounding the Greek garden.

Thaddeus had already noticed it, and also the fact

that this same door stood invitingly open, as though some of the pillagers had entered there.

With a cry to his friend he made for the exit.

Numerous glass frames lay between, doubtless forming hot beds in which the noble Greek owner of the place had raised early vegetables with which to tickle his palate.

Crashing through these they went.

Both men had ridden with the hounds at home, and chased poor Reynard to his doom, intent upon his brush as a trophy, so that it was easy for them to retain their seats even though this plunge through glass was a novel experience.

A few more leaps and solid ground beyond was gained, with the open door near by.

It was at this moment that a man, dressed in the garb of a Greek, darted toward this same door.

He would be able to reach it before they did, and his manifest intention was by closing the same after him prevent their egress.

In time of war stern and drastic measures are oftentimes necessary in order to gain the desired end, and Thaddeus, realizing the possible consequences of being shut within those high walls, where they must speedily become targets for the guns of the guerrillas within the house, did not hesitate to open his battery upon the runner.

Such was his success that the bold marauder sprawled upon the turf a dozen feet from the object of his solicitude, paying the penalty for his ill-advised rashness, which might have been spent in a more worthy cause.

Through the doorway and on to the street, still leading the extra horses, they went.

Many wistful glances were cast upon these same horses, and more than one man desirous of leaving doomed Larissa in haste felt a greedy desire to impress one into his service; but somehow they did not quite fancy the looks of the determined big foreigner who rode like a trooper and who carried his revolver in plain view, as did also the artist.

At any rate they arrived at the hospital still in charge of both steeds.

Sir Giles went in to get the girls while Thaddeus mounted guard over the prizes.

There was need of this care.

Scores of demoralized men, soldiers, and civilians filled with unspeakable terror at the prospect of falling into the hands of the Turks, and as yet unable to leave Larissa unless they went on foot, eyed the ragged specimens of equine glory enviously, and that some of them did not make a daring bid for a mount in this case was due to the stern, uncompromising appearance of the big Englishman who sat upon one of the animals

and held ready in his hand a little weapon for which these men of Greece had a profound respect, since it was capable of backing up the first word with five others, all equally forceful.

While Thaddeus had never shone as a society lion he was quite a success as a military man, his commanding presence lending an air of respect to his person.

The girls were quickly ready.

These strong signs of demoralization around them had naturally affected both, and they were quite willing to leave Larissa.

Hawkins indeed came near having a fainting spell when she saw the sea of faces around them after they were mounted, each wearing such an eager, covetous look, that spoke more eloquently than words could have done.

Even the guardsman was secretly relieved of a heavy burden when they finally left this mob behind without an encounter taking place.

He had feared lest some spark explode the magazine, and they suffer in the shock.

Only prompt action spared them.

Had they lingered in the vicinity of the military hospital a few minutes longer some fear-stricken wretch would have precipitated trouble.

The scenes they witnessed in and around Larissa



were indescribably sad, though occasionally some ludicrous spectacle caused a momentary reaction—there are always some people who without meaning to be humorous manage to do comical things.

Imagination can picture the scene, with the road thronged by a mass of fleeing people, old and young, endeavoring to save the most precious part of their humble household effects.

Those few who had a horse or a mule were the envied of their fellows.

A few pushed handcarts piled high with chairs and other paraphernalia of household use.

More than one old woman staggered under a tremendous feather bed, which with the articles piled on top of it represented her *lares* and *penates*.

Through this surging mass of humanity it was often impossible to pass.

On such occasions Thaddeus acted with his usual promptness, leaving the gorged road and taking to the fields, to strike the thoroughfare further on.

The limited capacities of the railroad had all along been wholly monopolized by movements of the troops and government stores—it was absolutely necessary that these latter be kept from falling into the hands of the enemy.

For a time Thaddeus scanned the horizon with some uneasiness, fearing lest a detachment of the ferocious

Bashi Bazouks should make a swoop down upon the ebbing tide of fugitives and commence some of their favorite work.

This horror was spared them.

Perhaps the Greek forces had been so arranged as to keep them in abeyance until the main body of fugitives were given a chance to escape.

The further they left Larissa behind, the better Thaddeus was pleased.

His opinion concerning Nina's sacred mission as a nurse was undergoing a change. He respected the noble calling, but would much rather some other than his sweetheart undertook it. Nurses he thought should be old maids with a duty in life, and not charming young women.

He secretly chafed under the situation and hoped Nina would soon find her brother, when possibly this rather Quixotic notion might die a natural death, so that she would be content to assist the heroic sons of Attica to some place of security, and not think it necessary to be in the whirl of danger at the front.

Twenty miles would bring them to Pharsalia, where the crown prince was forming his lines anew, determined to make a most desperate stand against the hosts of the Crescent.

Here they would find some secure place where Nina and Hawkins could be left.

The two men were anxious to engage in the fight, Thaddeus especially being afflicted with that eagerness peculiar to military men when the battle is on and some duty holds them in leash.

They found the Greek army occupying the hills back of Pharsalia.

The men were working like beavers, throwing up intrenchments, and covering all weak points with the artillery.

When the Turks ran up against this line of defense they would be mowed down like ripe grain; and it must call for flank movements very like those by means of which General Grant worked his way to Richmond, in order to uncover Prince Constantin's position, which possible move of the enemy he anticipated, and sought to prevent as far as his limited force would allow.

Behind this line the mass of fugitives found safety.

# BOOK FOUR.

## WON MIDST FLAME AND BATTLE SMOKE.

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### CHAPTER XXXI.

#### UNDER CROSS AND CRESCENT.

THADDEUS found that the young American girl could not be influenced to leave the front so long as there was work to do.

She and Hawkins were in great demand at the field hospital at Pharsalia, being treated with the utmost courtesy by officers and men. The commander in chief, no other than the heir apparent to the throne, personally thanked them for their labor in the cause of suffering humanity, and assured Captain Brown that they would most certainly be looked after the first thing, being taken to a place of security then preparing back of the impregnable Greek line, in case the Turks threatened Pharsalia.

The crown prince had been especially attracted toward Thaddeus, in whom he recognized a kindred spirit, and for whom he experienced one of those sudden likings peculiar to impulsive temperaments.

He desired to have the guardsman attached to his staff in some way, an honor which Thaddeus fully appreciated, but which he declined for fear lest it should

give offense to the brave Greek officers who already occupied such positions. Besides, it was his desire to see what he could of the actual fighting, and this he would hardly be in a position to do if tied to headquarters.

He and Sir Giles had thoroughly and eagerly canvassed the situation.

Their war map had been most studiously conned, so that they were in a position to grasp the whole situation as it stood on this day.

It was hardly probable that the forces of Edhem Pasha would advance upon the new position of the crown prince for days to come—the second line of defense was almost impregnable, his own troops worn out with the awful work in the mountain passes where they had left heaps of slain, and besides, there was need of stores in order to supply the vast army now in the enemy's country.

Naturally, as soon as Larissa was in his hands, Edhem would sweep some of his columns toward the Greek base of supplies at Volo. The hungry Turks yearned to make a great capture here, since considerable of their own accumulated provisions had been captured or destroyed when the Hellenic fleet bombarded Katerina on the gulf of Salonica.

Between Edhem's hosts and this rich prize of Volo lay one obstacle.

This was Smolenitz, the ex-minister of war.

The crown prince placed great dependence on this sturdy general whose characteristics were much like those of Wellington, or of General Thomas, often called the Rock of Chickamauga because his refusal to retreat before the tidal waves of gray clad foes saved the Union army from a frightful panic.

Constantin had detached what men he could spare, and was whirling them off toward Volo on special trains.

This was the opportunity Thaddeus as a military man craved—to be where the opposing forces must come together in the fierce shock of battle. Another than he experienced the same longing. Sir Giles!

The artist blood was on fire—these remarkable scenes appealed to his Bohemian spirit, and he was making innumerable thumbnail sketches of stirring scenes that would prove of inestimable value to him in times to come.

Thus they had agreed that for energetic men of their caliber the desirable place just then was with Smolenitz.

Upon explaining to his highness, it pleased him to confer upon Thaddeus the title of a colonel in the Grecian army, and to buckle upon his person the belt of a sword which he trusted would be wielded for the honor of Greece.

Then a brief dispatch was given Thaddeus for Smolenitz, more to introduce the Briton to the grim fighter than for other reasons.

The guardsman was ready to swear by the affable crown prince after this exhibition of his kindness, and eagerly he and Sir Giles took passage on top of a railway carriage, as there was no room within, the space being occupied by soldiers, packed as closely as sardines in a tin.

That was a great experience.

They saw signs of the outriders of Edhem's army several times, doubtless on the way to cut the railway, in order to prevent the stores at Volo being sent to the Greek camp, which would be a strategic move of great and far reaching importance, and could not possibly be prevented without a general engagement on the plains of Thessaly, which must be avoided by the weaker army of Greece.

Finally the reinforcements arrived at the camp of Smolenitz.

It was found that this man of war had taken up his position, boldly challenging the oncoming army of the Crescent with his little force, fighting under the flag of the Cross.

Diplomacy is a good thing, a grand thing in its place, but sooner or later there comes a time when heroism must come to the front, and Smolenitz was

resolved to teach the confident Turks a lesson they would never forget.

Thaddeus and Sir Giles were warmly received by the general, whose bearing at once impressed them as that of a man who could not be driven.

His soldiers had implicit confidence in his sagacity, and were ready to follow to the death.

Thaddeus knew as soon as he met Smolenitz that he was built on the heroic order.

To himself he chuckled and echoed Sir Giles' quiet remark that he "surmised they would experience all the fighting they desired."

It was not long in coming.

The eager enemy, intent on reveling in those accumulated stores at Volo, in defiance of the Greek gunboats defending the port, had pushed on like a great swarm of locusts traveling over the forests and fields and kraals of South Africa.

Suddenly they came slap up against an obstacle in the way—an obstacle that stretched out its many arms like the tentacles of a giant octopus and wrought dire destruction.

A blaze of fire flashed in the face of the advancing Turks, before whose hot breath they fairly reeled.

Men went down in winrows like ripe grain before the mowing machine.

This was war with a vengeance.



The Turks not expecting such a reception, seemed to be taken aback.

Their distress was only temporary.

Then once more they came on.

It is a peculiar characteristic of the Turk that once under fire he refuses to be bound by the rules of the manual.

Turks have seldom if ever marched in solid rank up to the frowning battery from whence comes a hot raking fire—English, American or German, even French regulars would do this, the ranks closing up as men dropped; but these fierce Moslem tigers have a way of fighting peculiarly their own.

Each man is a law unto himself.

When the charge was made they sprang forward with utter disregard as to order.

Man to man they fought over the breastworks, and the Greek patriots were given a glorious opportunity to prove their mettle.

Right gallantly they responded to the call of their fighting general.

No one dreamed of retreat—the fierce attack was repelled and the ground sprinkled with Moslem slain.

Calmly they recovered their breath, these Greek soldiers who sought to honor the sacred memories of nearby Thermopylæ, and reloaded their weapons to be in readiness for the next assault.

**It came.**

Again the terrible wave of battle reared its bloody crest above the hastily thrown up fortifications.

And once more Grecian valor sent their Moslem foes sullenly back, like whipped hounds to their kennels.

**This was as unexpected as it was staggering.**

Plainly the dash to those military stores was not to be as much of a picnic as Edhem Pasha at first believed.

**This rock must first be removed.**

Another attack was ordered.

By sheer force of numbers perhaps these indomitable Greeks might be worn out—what valor failed to accomplish brute strength might achieve.

**Thaddeus was in it all.**

Every arm was needed in this emergency, and the sword buckled on his person by the gracious hands of the crown prince received its first baptism of blood on this immortal day when Smolenitz stood in the road and the successive billows of veteran Turkish soldiers broke over his position.

He fought independently at first, but as the fortune of war threw him in line with a company of young Athenians whose captain had gone down in the first engagement, he somehow attached himself to them—they recognized that military bearing and genius that are bound to show at such a time when the subject is worthy, and followed his lead eagerly.

Sir Giles was also in it, though perhaps to a less extent than his friend.

He stored his mind with pictures of battle, such as might be useful later on, but this was a period of too much action to remain out of the *mêlée* and besides, Sir Giles had a few soldier ancestors who had won renown at Sevastopol, Radowa, Waterloo, in Egypt, and during the great Sepoy mutiny.

There as considerable of fight in him, despite his rather dandified ways.

Sir Giles was more than he appeared to be, possessing a reserve force that could only be brought out upon an occasion such as this.

When the third desperate charge had been successfully met, and the broken forces of the sullen enemy were falling back toward the reinforcements constantly arriving, our two adventurers chanced to meet.

They hardly recognized each other, owing to the strange garments with which they were clothed, and the burnt powder disfiguring their faces.

"Well, are you satisfied now with such a taste of actual war?" asked the baronet, who had his left arm in a rudely improvised sling.

Thaddeus did not smile.

"Yes, and I shall hardly yearn to be in it again though there is a fascination about it all which must run in the blood. But the tactics of these Turks are

so opposed to all I have ever learned—it is almost like fighting a mob of tigers fresh run from the jungle. They leap forward almost like human cannon balls. Do you know, Sir Giles, in all this horrible hubbub of confusion I have been greatly struck with the coolness and discipline of the Turks. In the midst of the hottest fighting, I saw four Turkish soldiers, advancing in skirmishing order under a deadly fire, become detached from their main body. Nevertheless, they continued to advance with perfect self-possession amid a hail of bullets. One of the men was hit and fell, then a second was shot, and the third received a bullet wound; but the fourth man calmly continued firing without regard for his personal safety until he too went under. It was almost sublime, the most remarkable bit of daredevil heroism I ever had the fortune to witness. But look, my friend, they have as yet only had a taste. Again they roll forward while the brave Greeks await them. To your post and may the God of battles prosper the right this day.”

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE CRY FOR HELP.

AGAIN those fighters from across the border of Macedonia hurled themselves upon the lines brave Smolenitz defended with such bull-dog courage.

Sooner or later this place would become untenable and the Greeks must retire to a new line—it had been the general's aim to cripple the enemy so far as was possible—at no time was it even hoped that so small a factor as his force could defeat Edhem's entire army.

Delay was what they wanted.

Each hour was of value in saving the stores.

Besides, Smolenitz was quickly taking some of the confidence out of these Turks who had boasted of the pleasant walkover they expected to have to Athens, once a start was made.

Some of this assurance had been already knocked out of them at Milouna Pass, where the most severe hand to hand fighting occurred.

Ere the sun went down on this day Smolenitz had hurled back the enemy four separate times.

The last experience almost finished his men, they were so weary from constant fighting.

There upon the field the determined Turks encamped, ready to renew the death grapple when morning came again, or it might even be, under the light of the moon.

That field was thickly strewn with Turkish dead, and hundreds of wounded crawled painfully off. Not a Grecian shot was fired at a crippled foeman—indeed, as the shades of night began to settle, men with stretchers sallied forth from the patriot lines, who brought in many a sorely wounded Turk to where he could receive attention at the hands of a field surgeon.

That was the teaching of the Cross—these men could not war against helpless foes, nor yet leave them on the battlefield all night at the mercy of chilling wind and frost.

All this while preparations were underway whereby the defenders of Volo might retire to the second line, which they expected to hold as gallantly as the first had been.

To deceive the foe the fires were left burning in charge of a few select, daring souls who were to make good their escape just before the coming of dawn.

This artifice was successful up to about 3 o'clock in that April morning, when, tempted by the moon, just a little past her full, the Turkish host made a sudden spurt up the incline.

They evidently hoped to take the defenders by surprise at this unholy hour.

It must have been an inspiring sight to see those thousands of brightly clad Turkish soldiers rushing up the hillside like a swarm of ants, stopping at nothing in their irresistible advance.

Doubtless they were amazed when half the distance had been passed over and not a shot broke the stillness of the night.

It must have seemed to them very like the ominous silence that precedes the rush of the hurricane, for with each passing second they expected to hear the crash of a thousand guns, and have the leaden messengers tear among them.

Still not a sound from above, where the fires burned brightly.

Then, as the advance of the great human wave was on the point of breaking over the crest, a single shot rang out, followed by desultory firing along the ridge.

Then the Turks knew all. It was a barren victory, since the trenches they captured were empty.

They made it hot for the few Greeks who had remained, faithful to the last, and half of whom never reached the second line of defense.

Again on the following day the fighting was resumed, and as before the valiant lieutenant of King George stubbornly held his own against repeated wild and enthusiastic charges.

All Greece was honored that day—whatever mistakes there may have been made in the campaign, and they were legion, were wiped out in the unexcelled heroism of her sons before Volo.

Thaddeus meant to have remained to the end, when the Greeks, gradually pushed back, would be compelled to stand at bay under the guns of their fleet; but he received an unexpected summons.

A message was handed to him by an officer connected with headquarters. Thaddeus never once thought to inquire whether it had been sent by semaphore, or by telegraph—perhaps the wires were not as yet cut by the foe.

It mattered little about the means employed in getting it to him, since the nature of the message was the main thing.

This staggered him, though it simply read:

“Come to me if possible.—NINA.”

Thaddeus believed he had done his whole duty to Greece—now with a clear conscience he could turn again to his own affairs.

She needed him, and sadly, else would she never have sent such an urgent message.

What had happened?

Was she sick, or did peril threaten?

Somehow, instinctively perhaps, Thaddeus' thoughts



launched out more in the direction of Skoubekoff than any other impending danger.

He became possessed of an eager desire to be up and doing, and from his position on Kara Dag he cast eager eyes toward the southwest, where, not much more than twenty miles away the army of the crown prince awaited the coming of the foe, and back of this line Nina was supposed to be pursuing her good Samaritan work as hospital nurse.

If ever the guardsman longed for the wings of an eagle it was then.

Twenty miles away, and she sent a cry for help!

He sought Sir Giles with a troubled face, and presented the case to him.

"You must go, and at once," was the ready response.

"But how?"

"By train if possible—if not, I believe I can secure a couple of horses."

"Then—you mean to accompany me?"

Their hands met in a squeeze that spoke louder than a thousand words could have done. Plainly Sir Giles was a man in a thousand, a friend indeed.

Both were men of few words, and indeed, this was a situation that required prompt action, lest they be overwhelmed.

Together they sought the valiant commander who had by his conspicuous bravery done so much to

remove the odium of defeat from the cause of the Greek defenders.

All was speedily arranged.

A dispatch was about to be sent to the crown prince but the telegraph had become suddenly paralyzed, they could only guess why.

As the next best thing the railroad would be used, while a messenger on horseback could also be dispatched in the expectation that one or the other would get through.

Our friends elected to go with the train.

There would be a dozen picked men to act as defenders of the dispatch bearer.

Just ten minutes later a motor that might have shocked an Anglo-Saxon engineer, left the vicinity of the Grecian camp, dragging one closed carriage.

This contained the little party of adventurers bound for the vicinity of Pharsalia.

Their pace was fair at first, but presently became wretchedly slow, for no one knew at what point nor in what numbers the enemy overran the track.

All were prepared for war—in fact they expected to see hot action of some sort.

Thaddeus worried much concerning the dispatch.

He even suspected that it might be some clever trick on the part of Skoubekoff to entice him to a region where he could be quietly slaughtered; but, as the

absurdity of this speedily presented itself to his mind, he dismissed the idea.

His other view he held to doggedly—that the persistent Russian general was in one way or another the prime cause for the message having been sent.

“Our time of reckoning draws near,” he muttered frequently, and then his hand would drop caressingly down to the sword which Constantin had so recently buckled about his waist, as though some intuition told him it would be through this means that the long standing debt must at last be settled.

That splendid blade, the gift of royalty, had already been valiantly wielded in the cause of Greece, so that it would only be in line with its record when drawn against his own foe.

Fortunately darkness had long since descended ere the start was made. They could thus creep along the track without being perceived. No headlight gleamed in advance, and not a glow could be seen in the carriage containing the soldiers.

A few of them, our two friends among the rest, smoked cigars or pipes—men will do that even though entering the jaws of death.

There was constant dangers—the track might have been dismantled, or a group of the Turks be lying in wait to receive them.

Men grow accustomed to being constantly in touch

with the grim monster—after his first battle, when the slaughter has been severe, no warrior entertains the same dread he once held for death.

Thus they passed over numerous miles.

No one among them knew just how far they had gone, save possibly the man who ran the motor, who even in the gloom of night could tell from various landmarks.

The suspense under which Thaddeus labored was so intense that time dragged by on leaden wings, and he naturally imagined they must have gone much further than was actually the case.

“Don’t you think we must be drawing near the camp?” he asked of Sir Giles who was seated squeezed up against him, for the little carriage was composed of only one compartment besides the cubby hole occupied by the guard, and into this all of them had pushed.

Sir Giles comprehended the mistake into which his comrade had fallen, and while he sympathized with his eagerness to be at their journey’s end he felt bound to set him right.

“I fear we are not over halfway—at least that seems to be the opinion of some of the soldiers who have been over the ground before,” he ventured.

Thaddeus stifled a groan.

It was very exasperating, this snail-like way in

which they fairly crawled along, when his blood was on fire with eager anxiety to obey the call for help which had been as eloquent to him as any that in times of old came out of Macedonia.

There was nothing that could be done to urge them on at a more rapid pace.

Thaddeus must possess his soul in patience—at least each minute was bearing him nearer to the object of his solicitude.

It seemed, however, as if all things were in league against this spirit of his which yearned to take wings and fly.

Hardly had he resigned himself to the inevitable agony of another long wait when the progress of the train slackened, and presently they came to a full stop. This meant something serious—the time for action had doubtless arrived.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### HOW THEY CHARGED THE BASHI BAZOUK CAMP.

No sooner had the carriage come to such a sudden and unceremonious stop than there was intense excitement among those who went to make up the cargo.

Heads were thrust from the openings, and some of the more impulsive leaped to the ground.

It did not require long for the situation to dawn upon them, one and all.

Just ahead was a bright illumination, caused by several camp fires, and around these could be seen scores of Turkish soldiers engaged in cooking an evening meal—dashing raiders, doubtless of the famous Bashi Bazouk type, since tethered horses were in plain view.

These fellows had evidently gone into camp upon the line of railway just after dark.

Their first business had been to cut the telegraph wires to prevent any further messages being transmitted between the crown prince and Volo, the base of supplies.

That they had not as yet started upon the destruc-

tion of the railway was singular, but as far as the eye could travel, aided by the light of camp fires, its twin rails could be seen.

A hurried consultation ensued.

What should be their plan of action?

The train might be abandoned and a circuit made around the hostile camp.

Bah! that was not to be thought of while a single chance remained of retaining the motor. Why not make a bold dash directly through?

Hurra! the idea caught their fancy to a man, and not a voice was raised in protest.

Back to the carriage again, and let every one lie low, since bullets might fly around them like leaden hail.

Thaddeus could not be restrained from occupying one of the windows—he seemed willing to incur the additional risk in order to be a witness of the strange spectacle, as the Greek motor thus recklessly charged the Turkish camp.

All had now once more sought their old places in the odd carriage.

The Greek engineer was at his post.

Men of his calling there might be on English and American railways who had charge of machines beside which this locomotive would appear a hollow mockery—magnificent motors capable of one hundred miles an

nour with a loaded passenger train behind, but never, in any clime did a grimy hand hold a throttle, that belonged to a heart braver than that of this hero.

Never once did he offer any protest—had the jaws of death opened wide before him, and duty urge him on, he would have plunged into the abyss without wavering.

All honor to the engineer who held that throttle.

They were now moving.

In some way known only to his craft, the grimy man at the helm was making a start without an exhibition of the usual amount of puffing and wheezing, which under the conditions was a point in their favor.

They would secure a certain headway before the camp was reached, and this must carry them through unless some unexpected obstacle arose before them.

It was a period of intense excitement and no one could do more than guess the probable outcome of the game.

Their momentum increased as more steam was turned on.

The noise of the advancing train was already of enough volume to attract the attention of those on the outskirts of the Turkish camp.

As they turned their eyes in this direction what must have been their amazement to discover a train bearing full upon them.



Loud shouts of warning arose.

Consternation swept through the camp much as wildfire leaps across the prairies in the fall season, when the grass is sere and dead.

Some among the Turkish raiders retained their presence of mind, and made ready to meet the onset of the train with a heavy volley.

Others were apparently paralyzed with astonishment and consternation—it was as though this specter motor, whirling down the track like a dragon of destruction had been conjured into being by magic, and they were utterly at a loss to decide whether it existed in fact or only as a creature of their imagination, fired by ardent potations.

The grimy hero in the motor, knowing the risk he ran, crouched low behind his shelter, but his hand made no attempt to check the mad progress of his charge. For life or death, good or evil, they were bound to take what fortune sent.

Already the outskirts of the camp had been picked up, and on either side bunches of the amazed raiders could be seen, gaping at the strange spectacle of a motor and a single coach dashing recklessly through their midst.

A few remembered they had guns, and began to pop away almost at haphazard, without much chance of doing material damage.

Then Thaddeus, who still hung to his window as though entranced, beheld a spectacle he could never forget.

One of the fires had been built upon the roadway of the track, and the several men around it did not appear to realize their danger until the swift-moving besom of destruction had swept down upon them.

Then men, blazing brands and cooking utensils went to the right and left in one great meteoric shower.

Thus they cleared the hostile camp and shot down the line.

Every man among them breathed easier when this fact became patent, for at least one danger had been left in the lurch.

Thaddeus had received no injury as the result of his rash exposure, nor had any one else in the carriage been struck by flying lead, thanks to their precautions in lying low, though they had good reason to believe several unwelcome messengers from Turkish guns had crashed through the upper framework of this wonderful coach.

One thing struck Thaddeus as exceedingly odd.

Their progress maintained the same ratio of increase in speed.

When they flashed out of the Bashi Bazouk camp they were already making splendid time; but once the danger had been left in the rear it would be natural

to believe the engine driver might reduce their speed, in order to be prepared for possible dangers lurking in the dark, since there was always a chance of a misplaced rail.

Instead of this occurring it became evident to all that they were still on the full jump—that their mad speed was increasing instead of diminishing.

Various exclamations arose from the men, showing that this peculiar condition of affairs caused them not a little consternation.

Sir Giles was the first to hazard a guess that seemed reasonable.

“Our brave engineer has been shot, and the train has run away,” he declared.

This seemed more than plausible, and these men, who were so ready to face any ordinary danger without flinching, gave evidence of alarm and fear. They could charge up to the cannon’s mouth and meet the fierce attack of zouave and Bashi Bazouk where sword bayonets were crimson with gore, and men fell dead in heaps; but to face a danger which they were so utterly helpless to fight against, brought a vague shiver racing up and down their spinal columns.

“What would you do?” demanded Thaddeus, as he laid hands on the artist, already halfway out of the door he had drawn open.

“Make my way to the engine along the side of the

car. We are all lost unless some one stops the mad runaway," came the reply.

Thaddeus realized that this was the truth, for they were reeling along now at a terrific pace, at least for a Grecian railway.

"But I might go—I am the stronger!" he cried.

"And I the more agile. Besides, I have some knowledge of mechanics, and you might not be able to stop the thing if you reached it. Let go my arm, my dear fellow."

And Thaddeus, recognizing the force of this persuasive argument, relaxed his detaining clutch.

"God watch over you, brother," he said.

Then Sir Giles was gone.

He had undertaken a tremendous task, but when did one of his class ever shrink from accepting a sacred trust, regardless of the danger involved?

It was no small thing to clamber along the foot-board of the carriage, seeking what precarious hold he could above, while the vehicle was reeling and plunging and tossing so madly along.

Nor was the artist's self-imposed task rendered any the less hazardous by the fact that time was an important factor in the game.

He made the trip in safety, though more than once the brave fellow came within an ace of losing his grip, owing to some unexpected whirl of the vehicle.

A miss is as good as a mile, and so Sir Giles thought as with resolute mien he drew himself into the cab of the runaway motor.

It was just as he had surmised.

A random bullet had found the crouching engine driver, and he lay in a heap where he had fallen in the discharge of his duty.

There was no time to be wasted for they were now rushing onward into black space at a speed little short of what might be termed lightning.

Groping about Sir Giles found lever and throttle and immediately set to work bringing the wild runaway to a speedy stop.

Again the resolute daring of a single man had wrought saving grace, for his prompt action prevented a terrible disaster.

When the motor's speed had slackened to a snail's pace, Sir Giles allowed it to continue.

The value of his caution was soon made manifest, when without warning the motor began bumping along the roadbed and then came to a sudden halt that threw them all off their feet.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish—wrecked almost in sight of port, for they could see the many camp fires of the Greek forces on the mountainous stretch back of Pharsalia.

It was as they suspected—rails had been removed

looking to the capture of any train laden with supplies that might come along.

Had they struck this spot when swinging at full speed, the awful result can be readily anticipated.

As it was, beyond a few minor bruises, no one had received any injury save the man in the cab, whose life had been given to his patriotic mission.

There seemed nothing for it but to make the balance of the journey on foot.

It could only be a few miles at best to the camp of the crown prince, and if all were as eager as Thaddeus to set foot within these boundaries it would not take them long to pass over the intervening territory.

While they were discussing the advisability of following the line further, or striking off more to the left in order to avoid all chances of an encounter with possible enemies along the railway, the sudden thud of horses' hoofs reached their ears.

At first no one could tell from which quarter these sounds came—all they could swear to was the fact of the rapid beating of swiftly flying horses increased in violence.

Then one of the men cried out:

"The Bashi Bazouks have followed us—into the railway carriage and hold the fort!"

Thaddeus might have considered it wiser to have fled in the darkness, but already the Greek soldiers

were tumbling into the coach in hot haste—as sheep leap a fence after a bell wether; so they one and all followed the lead of this man who called “into the carriage and hold the fort!”

Indeed, the Turkish horsemen were so very close that there was no time to argue the matter, and all action had to spring from impulse.

So in lieu of any better plan our two Britons also sought shelter. As luck would have it they occupied the guard's compartment, in company with three of the soldiers.

The darkness still rested like a pall upon the plain, but a radiance along the eastern horizon gave warning that the mistress of the heavens might soon mount her throne in the azure vault, where countless stars served as her courtiers.

Evidently the first round of the deadly battle must be fought in the gloom, with dimly seen figures of advancing horsemen serving as targets for the flashing guns that would belch out their fire from every coign of advantage around the car.

The Turkish raiders evidently had been aware of the displaced rails, and anticipated the complete stoppage of the train, which accounted for their immediate and persistent pursuit.

Already they were upon the scene and their wild, fierce shouts as they discovered the wreck gave evi-

dence of their delight. The outcries, however, quickly assumed another phase when guns opened from the stranded carriage, and the expert marksmen secreted within the rude fort began to count results.



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## THE BATTLE OF THE WRECKED RAILWAY COACH.

It would have been hard to have conjured up a more remarkable engagement than this little battle of the stranded coach.

Keen eyes remained on the *qui vive* for any moving object, which immediately drew out a shot or two.

The Turks returned the fire, being men who never cared to have all the favors on one side, and for a brief space of time it was give and take between the hostile forces.

Such were the casualties, however, that the Bashi Bazouks deemed it the better part of wisdom to withdraw temporarily. In doing this they had several objects in view—first a breathing spell, second to await the coming of reinforcements from the camp, and last of all to allow the moon a chance to illumine the scene with her soft radiance.

Thaddeus would have deemed it the part of discretion to have beaten a retreat about this time.

He was deterred from advising this by the rim of

the moon appearing in the east, and also the fact that the majority of the Turks had taken up a position to the southwest—that is between the coach and Pharsalia, thereby cutting off their escape.

Evidently their situation was a desperate one, and apt to grow more serious with each passing moment.

Nor could either of the two loyal comrades at the time see any feasible opportunity to better their condition.

Another detachment of the enemy had arrived, for our friends could hear the shouts exchanged, and knowing what to expect were on the lookout for further trouble.

There was no lack of it.

The most greedy soldier of fortune might have had his fill and cried "enough."

From all sides the raiders galloped toward the central point—the wrecked railway carriage was the hub toward which these various spokes led, and from which also radiated the circle of biting fire that carried death in its breath.

Manfully those Greeks stood up to their task, and, assisted by the kind moon, sent their leaden missiles with terrible impact among the constantly decreasing circle of rough riders.

In vain did the advancing Turks adopt methods doubtless learned in many a wild foray with the Arabs

of the Soudan, dropping over on one side of their horses, thus making the beast not only a means of advancing upon the strange fort that bristled with such flashing guns, but a shield and buckler as well.

Men and steeds went down in heaps—the slaughter was fearful, considering the small number of men engaged—human nature could not stand it longer, and again a retreat was the order of the night.

That was where the Turks made a grave mistake.

Had they maintained the fury of their assault but a few minutes longer, the fort must have capitulated through a lack of defenders.

More than half of the little force had been laid low, for, while advancing, each Bashi Bazouk poured the hottest fire into the carriage of which he was capable; so that the garrison had been dreadfully weakened.

Another charge like that would finish them.

Thaddeus knew it positively.

In the small compartment they had suffered terribly, and it seemed a strange favor of Providence that the two Englishmen, though several times wounded, still lived through the hailstorm of bullets that laid their three companions low.

One of these chanced to be the general's messenger, and ere yielding up the ghost this brave fellow handed his dispatch to Thaddeus, binding him on his honor to deliver it personally to the crown prince. Some-

how he seemed to be possessed of the conviction that nothing could prevent the two English soldiers from eventually escaping the net of the fowler.

Affairs had now reached such a crisis that it was madness endeavoring to remain longer by the wrecked coach.

Thaddeus called to the others in the second compartment that if any were alive and able to crawl they had better take advantage of the one slender opportunity and endeavor to get past the enemy.

As if heaven were working in their favor, the moon at this critical stage became mixed up in a contest with a billowy mass of weird storm clouds.

Looking out from the badly shattered guard's compartment Thaddeus and Sir Giles could see several dark figures crawling away from the wrecked coach.

These may have been wounded Turks or possibly, as seemed more than likely, the balance of the dispatch-bearer's guard, carrying out his very sensible suggestion—the light was quite too uncertain to make sure, which fact pleased the guardsman in such desperate straits not a little, since he too intended immediately making the same venture.

"I hope you are not seriously wounded, Sir Giles?" he asked.

"There are a few little punctures, egad, but so far as I know they amount to nothing. At least I feel as

strong as could be expected," came the reassuring reply.

"Good. Then if you are ready we will take advantage of this cloud."

"Tell me your clever plan, my dear boy."

"I am not at all sure that it is what you might call clever, but to me it seems a *dernier ressort*—there is nothing else left us. If we are fortunate enough to get past the line of our enemy we may have a chance to seize upon some horses, you know."

"Jove! that would just suit me, with my stiff leg," returned the cheerful baronet, "so lead off, and heaven help us this night."

They climbed out of the coach and immediately flattened themselves upon the ground, which was not any too soft to please them.

Crawling along toward the west, they kept a good lookout for the enemy. It was a most peculiar situation, and reminded Thaddeus of many tales he had read in his youth of adventures among the Indians in the Far West, or thrilling escapes of English soldiers during the great Sepoy rebellion in India.

Thaddeus still trailed his sword with him, being possessed of the idea that it was fated to be the means of avenging him upon Skoubekoff.

Sir Giles had the repeating gun, to which was a broad strap attached in the German fashion, by means

of which it could be thrown over one's shoulder, just as a cavalryman carries his carbine when on the jump.

They managed to make fair progress considering the difficulties that beset their way.

Thaddeus cast many an anxious eye aloft. He was deeply concerned with regard to the passage of those clouds. They appeared to be everything that could be wished, but he knew their treacherous nature, and that they could not be depended upon. At any moment they might break, allowing the moon full swing.

This emergency had been provided for in their agreement—should the smiling face of fair Luna attempt to sail out from her present obscurity both men were to be there, curled up, and as devoid of motion as the dead.

That was their only hope, should hostile eyes discover them; and even then it would be the most natural thing for the Bashi Bazouk, who seldom took chances, to thrust a saber or fire a bullet into any suspicious object.

Fortunately for our friends, no such necessity occurred, since the moon remained veiled during their peculiar advance.

They were not long in reaching a point where their enemies held forth.

Progress became slower here.

It was a critical stage in the game.

They could hear the Turks conversing to the right and left, and moving figures were seen all around them, so that the danger of discovery being about their heads continually.

Still they dared to crawl and roll a few feet at a time, and always toward the west, so that progress was being made.

If discovery came they would have a fighting chance for escape, which was about as much as they could ask.

Thaddeus had views of his own, and gradually led his companion toward a group of horses tethered on their left. He meant to take chances in endeavoring to gain possession of these animals, believing it would surely pay. The end justified the means.

True, they were in the midst of enemies, and even when mounted it would be a ride for life, but the Greek lines were not many miles away, and men who had their lives at stake might be expected to do themselves credit. So, when the time came he gave the word to Sir Giles, and both of them suddenly springing to their feet, dashed upon the coveted horses.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A RIDE FOR LIFE.

THE coveted steeds were not to be secured without a struggle, for which fortunately our two friends were prepared.

At the time they sprang to their feet and opened their little run, the horses were only a dozen yards away. They could distinctly see a Bashi Bazouk seated carelessly astride one of the animals, his leg thrown over the saddle, as he conversed after the quick, terse fashion of his kind with two comrades upon the ground.

So speedily did the guardsman and Sir Giles cover the intervening space that they were upon the trio almost before the Turks knew of their presence.

A startled exclamation from the man on horseback brought the others to their feet in hot haste.

They were given little time to collect their senses in order to grasp the situation—two men very much in dead earnest had decided that it would be to their advantage to possess those steeds, and meant to enforce their demand at the point of sword and rifle.



Thaddeus had already grasped his weapon, and ere the mounted rough rider could more than half-draw a firearm from his girdle the gleaming blade flashed before his eyes and suddenly sheathed itself in his bosom. Thaddeus was a soldier, and this was *war*, so what else would you expect?

As the stricken raider fell from his horse the guardsman seized upon the bridle, and was in the saddle almost before the Bashi Bazouk landed with a thump upon the ground.

Knowing there were two others to handle Thaddeus did not stop there. He had made a good start, and had learned in early life never to be weary in well doing. Sir Giles, however, proved himself well able to take care of his side of the house.

He had the gun, and surely a man who in the past had done as much hunting in African jungles as the baronet, should be able to give a rattling good account of himself when thus armed and equipped.

When the two ferocious Turks scrambled to their feet directly in front of him, Sir Giles knew it would be necessary to act promptly in order to retain the advantage given to his cause by the nature of their surprise.

Therefore he fired point blank at one chap, and as if confident that a second dose would not be necessary in that quarter, immediately leaped at the second warrior.

This worthy, alarmed at the awful fate that had so unceremoniously befallen his two comrades at almost the same moment, burst the spell that endeavored to bind him, and fled from the spot. He ran as only a fear-stricken Bashi Bazouk could run, dodging from side to side like a startled woodcock in zigzag flight.

Doubtless this eccentric action was caused by a desire to baffle the aim of the terrible foreign devil, whom he believed desirous of planting a bullet squarely in the small of his back.

Sir Giles was perfectly content to see his foeman in full retreat.

The field was thus cleared almost like magic, and Thaddeus, already mounted, had made haste to seize upon the bridles of the other two nags before they escaped, startled as they were by the flash and roar of Sir Giles' gun.

The baronet artist now made haste to throw himself into the saddle. There was need of alacrity.

All around them arose clamorous outcries, and already the pounding of horses' hoofs announced that alert enemies were on the move.

Away they went, helter skelter, yet in a general way aiming for the region of the Greek camp at Pharsalia.

Of course the Turkish raiders immediately grasped the situation, and quite a knot of them set out after the fugitives.

"Bend low," called out Thaddeus, and hardly had Sir Giles followed the advice when the bullets began to cut the ambient atmosphere around them at quite a lively clip.

The chase was like all others of a similar ilk so often and minutely described.

Each party belabored their horses in the effort to extract all the speed possible.

Neither Thaddeus nor his comrade were old campaigners in this line, and of necessity could not hope to turn in the saddle and bring down a pursuer each time they shot; such remarkable feats of marksmanship may be claimed only by men of the Buffalo Bill type—men whose lives have been spent on horseback and with a gun in their hands.

They knew full well their main chance for escape lay in the heels of their horses and the proximity of the Greek hosts.

Should the wretched Turkish steeds give out or refuse to expend their full quota of energy in behalf of the fugitives, there remained but one last resort—they must come to a halt, and behind the shelter of their horses stand at bay, selling their lives dearly, and falling at length in action, with their faces to the foe, as all loyal soldiers of her majesty are taught to do when an irresistible fate o'erwhelms them.

The shouts of the pursuers might have appeared

comical enough to have aroused their sense of humor, only for the gravity of the situation—they shrieked and prayed and routed at their beasts, in the endeavor to make better time, and no doubt also urged them on with any sharp-pointed prod that came handy.

In spite of all, their gain was hardly noticeable, as Thaddeus discovered, upon glancing over his shoulder; for since the firing had ceased they no longer hugged their horses' necks to avoid a random bullet.

If nothing in the shape of an accident occurred to change the aspect of affairs they could probably hold their own, and even stood a good chance of drawing the Bashi Bazouks into a dangerous ambush.

The moving panorama shifted from the open Thesalian plain to the foot of the hills, and along these the fugitives coasted, hoping now at any moment to hear the challenge of the Greek sentries.

It is strange how under certain conditions men who would not ordinarily entertain the feeling of revenge, allow such an expression of resentment to dominate their actions.

Sir Giles was about as free from malice as an ordinary artist could be, and yet these miserable Bashi Bazouks had hunted them so remorselessly, and given them such a close call on several occasions that he hugged to his heart the hope that at any moment they might be given a dose of their own medicine.

It is sweet to see the tables turned—for the hunted to become the hunters.

"My brute is giving down," announced Thaddeus, finally. His additional weight was no doubt the cause of it all.

"We must end it right speedily, one way or another, for they have begun to gain on us," was the rather lugubrious admission of Sir Giles.

Both men knew of but one way, and this consisted in facing the foe; but as such a move was far from pleasant they naturally put it off as long as possible.

The beast ridden by the guardsman was really showing pitiable signs of distress, and threatened to give up the ghost at any moment.

"Something must be done before he drops," declared Thaddeus, with vigor.

"Hold out a little longer—I could almost swear I saw a man standing yonder where the dark line runs along the flat. If you know any Greek war-cry now is the time to shout, lest we be riddled by our friends."

This again aroused the lagging hope of the guardsman.

Turning in the saddle he hurled back shouts of defiance at their pursuers, using expressions which had become familiar to his ears through hearing them repeated by his Greek allies during the desperate engagements before Volo.

The ruse worked to a charm.

Those in the rear, boiling with rage, endeavored to drown his clarion notes, and thus they failed to recognize the real reason of his utterance.

Sir Giles breathed a mental "thank God" when he shot past a line of crouching figures that had mechanically opened to receive them.

"Poor old Turks," gasped the winded Thaddeus.

They kept right on, fearful lest any stoppage might arouse suspicions among these wary birds of prey, whose one business in life it seemed to be to descend upon sheepfolds during the absence of the shepherd.

Ten seconds later a single shot rang out, and was immediately followed by a tremendous roar that seemed to shake the earth.

And with that multi-discharge the clouds parted and the moon sailed into view, lighting up the whole scene as if by magic.

Thaddeus had instantly drawn in his too willing beast, and together the comrades who had just experienced as close a call as falls to the lot of the average biped, turned to gaze in the direction where their foes *had been*—for not a single mounted Bashi Bazouk remained in sight.

Struggling figures could be seen upon the ground, one or two staggering to their feet in attempted flight which would undoubtedly be speedily stopped—some

riderless horses were galloping aimlessly about, doubtless bewildered by that flash of hell fire and the awful thunder clap that had emptied their saddles in a twinkling.

That was all!

Doom had descended upon those marauders of Greek villages as speedily as the lightning falls from the skies.

Thaddeus had never as yet seen such complete annihilation, and he shuddered, while Sir Giles was vindictive enough to exclaim:

“At least they will not trouble us again.”

It did not seem likely, unless the spirits of dead men could return to haunt those with whom they were at loggerheads in this world.

Moving figures there were now in plenty upon the open—the Greek sharpshooters had swarmed beyond their line of breastworks to either complete their work or make a few prisoners.

At least our friends had no further concern with the affair.

They were immediately approached by an officer who demanded to know their identity and how they came to be thus hotly pursued.

A few terse sentences gave him the gist of their adventures after quitting the camp of the brave Smolenitz, and upon learning that one of the Englishmen

bore dispatches intended for the hand of the crown prince, the Greek officer became more affable.

They were placed in charge of a guide whose duty it would be to take them direct to Constantin's headquarters.

And so it came to pass that ere midnight they found themselves listening to the warm thanks of the young prince who some day would wear upon his brow the crown of Greece.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## HOW HE HEARD THE NEWS.

THIS duty hurried through with, Thaddeus took it upon himself to tell the crown prince just why he had left General Smolenitz in the midst of his Herculean labors to keep the hordes of Turkey out of Volo.

"Ah! love beckons not in vain. At a word from the idol of his heart the soldier flies to her succor. I trust nothing serious has happened, *Colonel Brown*, and that this lovely maiden has not suffered harm within our lines. You have my sympathy and the deep regard one soldier feels for another. But stay, one moment. I may be able to help you."

Prince Constantin sat down at the improvised desk in his tent, and by the light of a lantern hastily wrote something to which he signed his name and pressed his royal seal.

"There," he added, handing it to Thaddeus, "you will find the power to carry out your will in almost anything. No officer will refuse to give you assistance to the utmost limit after reading that order."

Again he shook hands with both Englishmen.

Thaddeus did not tarry—he was in a fever of anxiety to find the girl he loved—to discover why she had sent that message.

He had obeyed the call—he had overcome difficulties that might have appalled ordinary men, but such sturdy scions of old British military stock as his ancestry could boast are not easily overwhelmed.

Of course his search must be first of all in the direction of the field hospital where he had left Mlle. Chicago and Hawkins at work at the time he departed for other scenes of action.

The camp of the Greeks upon the hills back of Pharsalia was exceedingly picturesque as viewed in the silvery flood of moonlight. It possessed other features in the line of an almost impregnable fortress, as the Turks had already discovered; for having felt of the position several times they seemed to shrink from renewed contact, just as a boy lets fall a red-hot iron he has unwittingly seized upon.

Even while Thaddeus had his mind bent upon the object nearest his heart, he could not avoid noticing how the forces of the crown prince had labored to improve their position since last he examined the re-doubt.

Osman Pasha, the wonder general who had gained world-wide renown as the defender of Plevna years

before, when the Russians vainly hurled army after army against the heights—Ghazi Osman as they called him with pride, might come and lend his genius to the assault, but the Turks would find these heights, bristling with Greek guns and manned by heroic souls, an impediment in the road to Athens which they dare not flank and leave behind, lest they lose all touch with their base of supplies.

As history has since recorded, they were fated never to carry these hills by storm.

The mailed hand of the Powers in concert was to appear in the game at this hour, and their voice sound in the ear of the irrepressible Turk.

“This far and no further—halt!”

One may be pardoned for expressing some curiosity concerning what the possible outcome might have been had the Turkish host, flushed with victory, declined to halt, but pushed on in the direction of Athens.

Doubtless Constantinople would have been bombarded by an allied fleet, and the map of Europe suffered serious changes, to the positive advantage of the Great White Czar, always in a position to demand the lion's share.

We know, however, that Ottoman statecraft had figured on just how far the Porte could play with the Powers, and that peace was finally declared, with poor Greece to pay a heavy indemnity to her enemy, besides

suffering changes in her mountain frontier, each of which was to the signal advantage of Turkey.

Sir Giles might have easily been pardoned had he sought repose upon reaching the friendly shelter of the Greek camps.

He had richly earned it.

Nevertheless he elected to remain with Thaddeus, sharing his fortunes like a true comrade of the Damon and Pythias, David and Jonathan type.

Such a friend is a rarity in these selfish days, and yet they may occasionally be found.

Over the ridge and situated in a spot least likely to receive the fire of an attacking enemy, they found the field hospital.

It was a busy scene by day or night, as there were but wretched means for sending any of the Greek wounded further south.

Doctors and nurses were worked half to death, and even at the hour past midnight when Thaddeus and Sir Giles stalked upon the scene, figures flitted about in the cold moonlight, carrying succor to those racked with pain—angels of mercy, whose cooling hands upon fevered brows seemed like a touch of heavenly rest.

Having been here before Thaddeus knew where the headquarters lay, and here he hoped yet dreaded to learn the truth.

Yes, the man who had fought like a hero under the

eye of Smolenitz himself—who had calmly faced death on the dispatch train, and later when assaulted in the wrecked car by the Bashi Bazouks—who had even exhibited undaunted courage when capturing the horses of the enemy and making a wild dash for life—this same man began to shiver as though seized with a chill as he approached the hospital center, where he would probably learn the worst there was to be told concerning Nina.

Ah! the little god of love can accomplish what the dragon of fear fails to do—the gentle persuasive force of the sun may cause the traveler to throw aside his cloak after the savage wind has made him only wrap it more closely about his form.

Sir Giles, though himself a bachelor, somehow or other seemed to understand and appreciate all this in connection with his partner.

Because he was no bepedict could not be held as evidence that he had never experienced the pangs and joys of the divine passion—what artist of his age but has been through the mill numerous times, and bears upon his heart the scars of various passages at arms with the arrows of Cupid.

He at once devoted his energies toward arousing some of the guardsman's well-known vim and what the Yankees call "grit," with such signal success that the spasm passed away, leaving Thaddeus with grim mien

and set nerves, determined to be worthy of his manhood.

Thus they entered the rude building that was used as the central portion of the hospital. Around them were the customary sights one might expect to find in such a place.

Scores of wounded Greeks lay upon cots or extemporized couches, for the fire of the Turks had been very disastrous, although their own losses were much more severe, and the sanitary department of the Hellenic army had not become so well organized but that there was a great lack of many things very essential to the comfort of the stricken.

At another time Thaddeus would doubtless have been deeply interested.

As a soldier these things appealed to him.

All else was forgotten now save the fact that among the nurses on duty he saw none that aroused a thrill in the region of his heart.

Plainly Nina was not here.

This fact again whipped into new life the flames of alarm and suspicion which for a brief period had been partly smothered by hope.

The glance he swept around showed him a figure he recognized—the matron who was looked upon as the head nurse.

Crossing the apartment where wounded heroes lay in

rows with life ebbing away, he was speedily at the side of the matron.

He found a woman wearied almost to death, and doubly discouraged through the want of system, the lack of doctors, and a scarcity of all that was needed to render prompt and efficient aid to the injured.

She remembered the guardsman—indeed, she would not have been a woman to have forgotten his manly figure and frank English face, so entirely different from the swarthy countenances of both Greek and Moslem.

Was it imagination or did she actually look troubled at sight of him?

At any rate Thaddeus' heart gave a painful throb under the distinct impression that he was about to hear ill news of some sort.

Good heavens! could Nina have been wounded by some flying missile—it would be too cruel to learn that she was lying upon some cot of pain, or more horrible still, lost to him forever!

He faced the nurse, his bloodshot eyes fastened eagerly upon her troubled face.

"You remember me, I am sure?" he asked.

"Yes, you are Captain Brown."

"Colonel Brown, the crown prince has said; but let that pass. I am here to see Mlle. Sherwood."

"Yes."

Her manner alarmed him.

She had bad news to communicate.

“Madam, when darkness set in I was in the camp of General Smolenitz—we had fought for two days, and weary with the battle I would have thrown myself upon the ground to sleep, when a line was handed me—the last message sent over the telegraph before it was destroyed. It was from Mlle. Nina, my betrothed wife, and it called upon me to come.

“Madam, we were twenty miles away, and between lay a part of the army of the foe, but even that could not keep me from obeying such a call. It matters little how we reached here, part of the way by train and the balance upon horses taken from Bashi Bazouks—we overcame all obstacles, delivered the dispatch to Prince Constantin, and now I have come to you to learn why she called to me, and where I may find her?”

The head nurse had by this time in a measure recovered her usual self-possession. She was a woman above the average, or she could not have held such an important position.

At the same time she felt keenly for the tall soldier before her—Thaddeus’ sterling merit as a man won him much sympathy—nearly every one liked the bluff guardsman because there was no affectation in his manner.



"Sir, it pains me to be the bearer of ill news," she began, when the lover interrupted her.

"She is not dead?"

"No, no."

"Or seriously injured?"

"She is not hurt at all, so far as I know, sir."

"Thank God for that. Now tell me the worst."

"She is gone."

"You mean left the camp?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then she found *him*," thinking of brother Robert.

"If you mean General Ivan Skoubekoff, she went away in his company."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### TO THE RESCUE OF BEAUTY IN DISTRESS.

HAD some one deliberately snapped his gloves in Thaddeus' eyes he could not have received a more severe shock than these words of the head nurse gave him.

Then his implicit faith in Nina returned—she loved him and in her heart scorned the old Russian soldier quite as much as any woman can look down upon an ardent admirer—it is human to have something of a tender feeling for a man, young or old, who worships at the throne of beauty.

There was more to learn.

“What you say surprises me. Did not the young lady leave word of any kind?” he asked.

“There is a letter for you in the desk yonder.”

“Be so kind as to give it to me.”

As she left him he turned to Sir Giles, who had heard every word.

“What do you think of it?” he asked steadily.

The unbiased opinion of this sterling friend was a

matter of considerable importance in the eyes of the troubled guardsman.

"Before you read the explanation in her letter, I am ready to swear this is a part of that damnable villain's scheming," returned the baronet steadily.

That was certainly explicit.

Sir Giles did not usually mince words when he was in dead earnest.

It chanced in the present instance that he simply echoed what was already a positive fact in the guardsman's mind.

Then the nurse came with the letter, which Thaddeus greedily devoured.

Sir Giles watched his frown deepen and the grim lines around his mouth grow more marked.

"Read it and see if your opinion changes."

This is what the fighting baronet found:

"I hesitate between my fear and a stern sense of duty. General Skoubekoff comes with a message direct from Robert, who lies wounded in a peasant's cabin ten miles to the west, on the road to Sophades. This may be a trap—he swears it is only a desire to serve me. Can I trust him? I am in despair. Oh! if you were only here to accompany me. Should Robert die—I cannot resist his plea, Thaddeus. Come what may I shall go, and trust to heaven. Hawkins will accompany me, and remember, dear heart, if the worst comes I am not helpless. I have sent you a message, but dare hardly hope you will receive it

without great delay, even if you are still in the land of the living. In life or death believe me only your beloved  
NINA."

Sir Giles had made his decision as soon as he finished reading.

"I do not like to think evil of any man, but from what I know of Skoubekoff and what you have told me concerning his astonishing *coup de main* in Teheran I would not put anything past him. He is utterly unscrupulous in affairs of the heart."

Thaddeus muttered something under his breath and again his itching hand touched his sword.

His prediction seemed in a fair way to be fulfilled.

The hour apparently drew near when Briton and Englishman would meet in battle array, and one of them not live to see another sun.

"What will you do?" asked Sir Giles, more to stir his companion into action than because he doubted what the answer might be.

"Follow him to the ends of Greece—to save her, or at least terribly avenge."

The man who spoke these quiet yet positive words had fought in two days fierce battles, slept by snatches on the cold ground, made the race from the trenches before Volo to Pharsalia since sundown, his tremendous energy exhausted on the road in conjunction with his encounter with the Bashi Bazouks, and yet here

he stood, firmly announcing his intention of taking horse and following Nina.

There was another possessed of the same spirit, yet with only friendship and a love of adventure to urge him on.

That was gallant Sir Giles—who could fail to take off his hat to such a modern specimen of old-time chivalry?—truly the days of the knight errant are not wholly confined to the dim past—even to-day men exist capable of proving that their hearts are true and brave in the sacred cause of friendship.

Thaddeus was as usual in a fever to be off.

Horses they needed, since the diligence in which the others had gone was the only one for miles around, and doubtless Skoubekoff's money had purchased that.

Sir Giles reminded him of the order which had been placed in his hands by the Crown Prince.

Now was the time to test it.

Horses were a scarce commodity in the camp of the Greeks—money might fail to procure a respectable mount; would this magic paper do more?

From the hospital they hurried and sought the officer in charge of the nearby artillery.

He read the order of the crown prince.

"What can I do for you?" he asked courteously, for his respect was increased by the emphatic mention

that the bearer, Colonel Brown, was a warm friend of Prince Constantin.

"We must have two of the best horses you can secure—life and death depend on it."

"In five minutes they shall be ready," and the officer at once gave the order.

"Ask him for a spare revolver or two. God knows how badly we may need them before we see the end of this adventure," advised the always "forewarned, forearmed" Sir Giles.

The weapons were immediately forthcoming—and when shortly after they were mounted and equipped, Sir Giles declared himself satisfied, while Thaddeus was fain to believe they represented moving arsenals.

"Never mind, my dear fellow; remember what hot work we have already seen this night. I rather think a few extra six-shooters would have been very welcome about the time we met that last charge on the overturned railway carriage;" and Thaddeus admitted the wisdom of his philosophy.

Ere leaving camp they were wise enough to again examine the map.

Fate seemed determined that they should learn by actual experience the *bona fide* condition of all these mountain roads and bridle paths of the Thessaly border.

Their course now, however, would deal more with

the level country at the foot of the hills and spurs jutting out from the great Othrys range which runs across Greece from the Ionian to the Ægean sea.

What troubled Thaddeus most of all was the long start the others would have.

True, there were outside dangers also, from wandering bands of Bashi Bazouks, spreading out over poor Thessaly just as the incoming tide seeks every nook and basin.

As near as he could figure this start represented two hours.

Could they make this up by hard riding, even taking it for granted that the diligence made no especial speed?

Who might say?

They were ready to do all that lay in their power to overtake the vehicle—no one could expect more.

So they rode out of the Greek camp that had so lately opened to them as a refuge; and again of their own free will faced the dangers hovering about the surrounding country, swarming with the merciless Turks.

Never did knight of old start out with mission more holy; and if truth and justice prevailed, surely success should be the lot of Thaddeus.

It only took a few minutes' run to bring out an expression from Sir Giles.

"How does your mount go—mine pleases me immensely?"

"The same here. I think the fortune of war has given us two of the best animals in the whole country."

"Perhaps that note of the crown prince had something to do with it. Our friend, the officer of the night must toady to royalty—to be in favor at court may mean a brilliant future."

"And I shall surely mention his name if ever the opportunity comes. Good horses may mean the success of our game. Those other wretched beasts were little better than crow-baits."

"Let us not find fault, since they saved us. The end and not the means. But it is a satisfaction to speed along like the wind."

"We may be drawing near dangerous ground, so it would be policy to keep ready."

So far they seemed favored on all sides—even the moon condescended to hide her smiling face behind the clouds, and thus conformed to their wishes—enough light remained to show them the road, without betraying their identity to any who might from a short distance witness their rapid flight.

Thaddeus was in a daredevil mood, and once his spirit found itself aroused, man or demon would not daunt him.



In such a condition men of his peculiar mold have charged a battery single-handed, and performed other prodigies of valor that have sent their names ringing down the ages as heroes—he was in a state of mind brought about by anxiety over Nina's fate and his late exploits in battle, when the army of Edhem Pasha would not stay his mad rush.

Hence, it behooved any stragglers along the road to beware how they came in the way of these desperate riders, unless protected by some magic talisman over which the god of battle had no control.

Ten miles can be covered in short order by well-mounted men, if nothing arises to delay their swinging progress.

Our two adventurers seldom spoke, but while holding tight reins, kept a constant and vigilant lookout for danger both along the road ahead and on either side.

The railroad ran not far to the north, and it was plausible to suppose that the Turks had overrun this in numerous places—in all probability they would also be attracted to the road, and even lie in wait for chance stragglers.

The country beyond had been thoroughly aroused, and the peasants were still fleeing out of Thessaly over the mountains into Phocis; so that encounters were frequent between these sturdy Greeks and the roving bands of guerrilla Turks.

Occasionally shots and cries sounded on the night air, and on the road the two horsemen passed several bands of panic stricken Greek peasants in full flight—more than once from these fellows had come a shout of friendly warning not to continue down the road, as the dreaded Bashi Bazouks, those marauders whom the farmers of Thessaly feared as the devil does holy water, were there.

And the two riders never slackened their pace one iota—indeed, if anything these warning cries caused Thaddeus to dig his heels into the quivering sides of his foaming steed in the endeavor to gain a fresh burst of speed. The more danger ahead the greater need for his presence.

They might have questioned some of these fugitives concerning the diligence, but that would necessitate delay, and when every minute counted Thaddeus could not dream of allowing this. Besides, the peasants were so utterly demoralized that it was problematical whether a straight story could be gotten by dint of the utmost diligence.

Better by far that they push on and accept what fate had in store for them.

Something warned Thaddeus that the hour was at hand when once again his arm must be nerved to fight *her* battles; but he could think of no opponent in this death struggle save the persistent Russian bear, and

over and over in his mind he was revolving his plan of campaign, when they two, in sight of the woman they both, adored should meet at swords' points and settle the question once for all.

They must be two-thirds of the way between Pharsalia and Sophades by this time, and still thundering along the hard road.

Thaddeus no longer looked to the right or left, but devoted his whole attention to the front.

Every leap brought him nearer the object of his solicitude, of that he was positive; and he found himself constantly on the *qui vive*, in the hope and expectation that the next bound would possibly bring them in sight of the lumbering old vehicle that had come thus far without accident.

At any rate there must be a change of some sort speedily enough, since matters could not go on in this way much longer.

It came in a manner Thaddeus at least had never fully anticipated

They heard shots ahead, coupled with hoarse shouts that denoted action, where men came in contact and struggled for the supremacy.

This was not the first time they had hearkened to such sounds since leaving the Greek redoubt, but somehow they were deeply affected by the outburst, especially when Thaddeus heard a bull-like voice, which

he readily recognized, roar strange Russian oaths, as though thus accompanying each desperate blow.

"Faster—they are attacked by Bashi Bazouks!" gasped the guardsman, as he kicked at his horse, already skimming the earth like a swallow.

And as might record breakers on the home stretch they shot down the road toward the wire—their goal being the spot from whence arose all the varied discordant sounds that accompany a battle on a small scale.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HE WAS AFTER ALL A SOLDIER AND A MAN.

As yet there was nothing save those stentorian Russian oaths to give them a clue, and yet they seemed to guess the truth as accurately as though their eyes rested upon the scene.

Plainly the diligence must have met with a mishap—possibly lost a wheel, owing to the abominable nature of the road.

This delay had perhaps only been aggravating at first, but eventually a still more serious danger overwhelmed them when the Turkish riders galloped upon the scene.

These marauders had been accustomed to seeing men tremble at their coming.

They lorded it over the poor peasants of Thessaly, and wherever they rode left a trail of suffering behind.

No doubt when they came upon the broken-down diligence they expected an easy victory, and dashed forward with wild shouts that were intended to paralyze the inmates

It chanced that on this occasion they had to deal with a man who could not be so easily reduced to a condition of innocuous desuetude—a man who had heard these same savage war-cries before in his life, when he led his men against the lines of Osman Pasha at Plevna.

The Russian veteran knew full well it was the height of folly to dream of holding any sort of palaver with these wild chaps.

They only argued with gun and sword, and with them in time of war might made right.

Besides, they were doubtless largely under the influence of liquor, a supply of which could be found in some of the many Greek villages which they overran.

Skoubekoff had proven himself no coward on many past occasions.

He added to the long list now.

Doubtless the ardent feeling he entertained for the charming American girl had caused him to do some ridiculous things in the effort to win her regard.

Now that he was wholly responsible for the acute danger that had come upon the woman he adored, the Russian bear proved his manhood by standing between her and the charging avalanche.

Springing from the diligence he had opened upon the Bashi Bazouks with the revolver he knew how to handle so well.

Each shot was followed by a result that decimated their numbers.

Astonished at this hot reception the Turks opened a straggling fire. Some of the flying bullets struck the diligence, but as the two women within, obeying the general's instructions had buried themselves as well as possible among the hair cloth cushions, which he had built up around them as they crouched there, they sustained no injury.

Hawkins shrieked in terror, but Mlle. Chicago was made on a different plan. She had a loophole through which she could see what was taking place, and an awful fascination compelled her to watch.

As the fusillade opened from the galloping horsemen she saw Skoubekoff fall to the ground as though stricken.

Perhaps this was a ruse to deceive the enemy, or it might be he had received a wound; but if so it was not so serious as to render him incapable of further effort. Again he was on his feet.

The surging riders were now close up, so that the remaining charges from his revolver were sent almost in their faces.

His actions were superb, and did credit to the name of the Czars in whose service he had spent his life.

Having exhausted the firearm, he hurled it at the nearest foeman.

Then came his sword ringing from its scabbard.

Nina saw all this—she seemed bound by a magic spell, and could not remove her eyes from the fearful sight.

Whatever feelings of repugnance she may have entertained toward the old general, on account of his annoying pursuit of herself, and his hatred for the man she loved, these were now swallowed up in the admiration she felt for his wonderful courage.

Besides, his sword stood between her and a cruel foe. There was no humbug about this affair, such as characterized the wonderful Teheran battle. When men went down here it was business pure and simple.

The Bashi Bazouks, eager to meet this sturdy enemy on a level, threw themselves out of their saddles as they came up, and rushed upon the sturdy Muscovite.

Then steel rang against steel.

Each Turk seemed desirous of crossing blades with this wonderful warrior who hurled defiance at them in the Russian tongue.

It mattered not one iota to them whether he be Yankee, Briton, Greek, Italian or Russian—he had come in their way, he had shot down comrades in their midst, and he must be removed.

The fiat had gone forth.



Perhaps some of them still held undischarged firearms, but these they would not utilize.

The Russian challenged their admiration by his very daredevil conduct, for say what you will soldiers are bound to respect bravery in their fellows, no matter under what flag they fight or what may be their color or creed.

Nevertheless, this chivalrous spirit did not prevent them from endeavoring to crowd the general.

Man to man the accomplished swordsman of Moscow was undoubtedly the superior of any one opposed to his steel—indeed, he might have been played against two or three at a time and mocked their attempts to pass beyond his guard while he surrounded his body with such a living wall of dazzling fire.

The case assumed a phase altogether different when eight or ten eager blades were thrust out from all sides, anxious to cross that of the heroic Russ or else drink of his blood.

No wonder the sword arm of Skoubekoff was worked to its utmost tension—no wonder the clash of smiting steel rang out with all the distinctness of a blacksmith's shop in full blast.

Right valiantly the veteran threw himself into the breach and stood there a barrier between the Bashi Bazouks and the broken vehicle.

He alone was to blame for bringing the woman he

adored into such danger—perhaps he could not save her, but at least he could die in her defense.

Ah! Skoubekoff, man of war and diplomacy, let all the evil done in your long and eventful life be forgotten—this last action must in itself serve to send your name down to posterity as that of a brave and true gentleman.

Again and again some of those numerous keen-pointed weapons would slip past his guard and reach his body.

He was bleeding from a dozen wounds, but he had given as many in return, and several of those who incautiously invited a lightning-like stroke lay there upon the ground, dead.

Unfortunately this did not better his chances a particle, for there were two others ready to occupy the place of every one who fell.

When a man engages in a hopeless struggle, he fights doggedly, as becomes desperation.

The general's one desire now was to "pile the ground with Moslem slain," as Bozarris of old had done on this historic territory—to build around him a rampart of dead Turks. Thus would every true soldier wish to die—it is the fate they invoke.

Already he was in a fair way to see his desire fulfilled.

Would that resistless arm never tire?

Like wolves the Bashi Bazouks crowded about, and by the very force of their numbers prevented him from striking with that freedom of movement so necessary in order to cover all points.

Evidently the calamity which brave Skoubekoff had staved off so long and so sturdily was now about to overtake him.

A whirlwind of savage blows descended upon him, and more than one saber withdrew crimsoned with heroic blood.

In the desperate defense his own blade was broken off short at the hilt.

Some there were who scorned to strike at him now, but others, ravenous as wolves for his life, pushed forward.

The broken sword vainly endeavored to dash these greedy blades aside.

Then came a murderous stroke from an unguarded quarter, and valiant Skoubekoff, his race run, fell to the earth, while from the diligence came a woman's scream of horror.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE SWORD OF THADDEUS BETWEEN.

THAT was what Thaddeus heard as he came tearing madly upon the scene with Sir Giles close at his horse's heels.

He had grasped the situation ere now—the broken diligence, the surging mass of gaudily garbed Turks, the venomous clash of steel and above all the furious cries of the combatants told him in positive terms that however much the veteran diplomat had desired to show his bravery in a mock fight, this was no entertainment on the lines laid down in Teheran—this affair bore all the earmarks of a most deadly hand-to-hand struggle where one man with the courage of a Trojan battled against a score.

And the scream that rang out above the clamor of battle announced some misfortune.

He missed the towering form of the general in the midst of the *mêlée*—good heavens, he was at last upon his knee, battling still as became his breeding, but in a hopeless cause.

Then Thaddeus opened upon the gang of wolves,

and Sir Giles echoed each shot, as the two dashed in among their foes.

At first the Bashi Bazouks were dazed by such a sudden and unexpected assault.

They gave way involuntarily on either side.

Thaddeus and the fighting baronet threw themselves to the ground.

The Turks, seeing in the moonlight that their new adversaries numbered but two, regained courage.

They were still many times numerically stronger than the foe, and such fierce raiders do not give up an object easily.

So with renewed cries of fury they again closed in—where they had counted on but one victim they might as well make it three.

Our friends found no trouble in exhausting their firearms—Thaddeus had laughed at the way in which Sir Giles insisted on carrying an extra six-shooter; but in such a dreadful pinch as this a dozen would have been a welcome addition to their armament.

After that, swords.

Nothing else remained.

Back to back the two friends stood, and endeavored to meet the furious onslaught of their savage foes.

Sir Giles had snatched up a saber that had fallen from the nerveless hand of a Turk to whom Skoubekoff had paid his respects.

The weapon was not wholly suited to his methods of swordsmanship, but when a man is in a desperate position he is not apt to stick at trifles.

When the saber got its work in its edge proved as keen as that of a scimeter.

Thus a most remarkable condition of affairs prevailed—Thaddeus was standing over his hated rival, defending him against the common foe.

The swordplay he had learned from Monsieur Le Boeuf, the Vienna expert, with the intention of utilizing it against Skoubekoff, was now being exercised in the endeavor to save that same worthy.

Fortune makes strange allies.

When have Briton and Russian fought on the same side—surely not since Napoleonic days?

Although by this time the Turks had been considerably reduced in fighting men, they were still in far superior numbers.

By dogged perseverance they could beat down these two comrades, even as they had the man from Moscow.

It was only a question of a few minutes at the most.

So with a dogged resolution they closed about their intended victims, and sought to find a weak spot in their defense.

Again those hungry blades came seeking life and meeting a sturdy resistance.

In the midst of the *mêlée* Thaddeus heard several

shots fired—the character of the reports told him whose weapon had been discharged—that Nina, in her great despair thus endeavored to lend him what little assistance she could.

Somehow, the act touched him deeply. It aroused him to still more desperate deeds of valor, for he remembered that not his life alone but that of the girl he loved was involved in the outcome.

And yet both men realized how hopeless was their fight.

One chance there seemed to be in a thousand that succor might come—that a band of Greek irregulars passing along the road, in search of foes with whom they could exchange shots, would come upon the scene ere it was too late.

Hope clings to the human heart in a wonderful fashion—the condemned man continues to expect executive clemency up to the moment they draw the black cap over his face, adjust the rope, and place him upon the fatal trap.

So these men who wielded the sword in defense of innocence and beauty seemed imbued with a strange belief that a merciful Providence would not allow them to fall victims to the savage foe.

They were to do their part as became soldiers manfully and well, and could leave the rest to a Higher Power, able to save.

Such confidence was sublime, and bordered well upon the marvelous. It must have been founded on fortune's favors in the past—some men have been through such perils that they expect to have a way of escape opened to them with the same confidence that the ordinary biped exhibits in waiting for the sun to rise above the eastern horizon.

At any rate it is a very comfortable frame of mind to be in, especially when the storm clouds are dark and lowering overhead.

A sanguine nature cannot be wholly repressed, no matter what an avalanche threatens.

In those few minutes of time both men doubtless performed prodigies of valor. So had poor Skoubekoff, yet they had finally downed him. In the same way they meant to wear these new champions out, when they would be hacked to pieces as enemies of the Sublime Porte.

It was doubtless a very laudable determination, looked at from the Turkish point of view; and the only barrier that stood in the way seemed to be the realization of Thaddeus' expectation of a rescue, which, it must be confessed, was terribly vague and uncertain.

All this while Nina Sherwood had been a horrified witness of the deadly strife.

She had seen Skoubekoff's gallant fight, and as we know, shrieked in terror at his downfall.



Then came the other two dashing upon the scene—more shots, continued shouts of men wrought up to frenzied passion, and like a dream she beheld her lover in Skoubekoff's place, battling sword in hand against that horde of grim-visaged warriors whose trade from childhood has been that of battle.

Never so long as she lived could Nina efface the horror of that picture from her mind. It would haunt her dreams and cause the color to leave her cheek whenever some sound brought vividly to mind the memory of clashing swords.

As for Hawkins, the wretched maid saw nothing. With her head buried in the cushions she had shrieked until hoarse, and now only an occasional groan announced that she still lived and suffered.

Sir Giles found his arm speedily tiring—the saber was so heavy and clumsy that it would have suited a giant better.

True, it had done yeoman service, and wherever it flashed woe betide the unfortunate wretch against whom it fell.

Slower it circled—with less power the blows went out—what folly in a man not to learn how to cut and thrust equally as well with the left as with the right arm.

Then and there Sir Giles registered a solemn vow that if it pleased kind fortune to grant him another

chance, the first manner in which he improved it would be to make himself ambidextrous. Which was perhaps a singular thing for a man to consider when the chances of his being alive three minutes later hung by a very slender cord. There are times, however, when the mind works with incalculable rapidity. Drowning men may snatch at a straw, but during the brief period that they struggle against impending doom a chart of their past life is said to unfold before their mental vision, conscience being horribly quickened by the approach of that dread monster, Death.

Thaddeus had not yet tired out, and he continued to deliver some sterling blows for the good cause.

Wounds they had both received, though as yet nothing that incapacitated.

The clamor had in some measure died away—perhaps this was because the Turks had settled down to the conviction that it took more than battle-cries and outrageous yells to subdue such fighters as these. Then again, what was more probably the truth, lay in the fact that there were now only about half the original number of Bashi Bazouks capable of giving vent to sound beyond groans.

At any rate, Thaddeus, who was straining his hearing in the strangely confident expectation of catching encouraging news, was able to hear the crash of horses' hoofs upon the road, as a squad of newcomers dashed up.

This in itself would not have given him any reason for positive hope, since it seemed just as likely that the new arrivals might be enemies as friends.

But, as the voice of the Russian had pictured the whole situation to his mind, so now the shouts of the leader who came dashing into the *mêlée* disclosed his identity.

None but the O'Shaughnessy could roar out those startling sentences, those tremendous prophecies of evil against the Turks—only lips that had touched the magic blarney stone were capable of sending such a choice collection of trooper anathemas against the invaders.

Surely such a blast must in itself go far toward causing the Bashi Bazouks to tremble.

But the volley of words was not all—Rory had companions, Greek soldiers who had seen battle, and were ever ready to knock over a Turk on sight.

These fellows turned the tide—the Bashi Bazouks were loath to run, but they knew when they had enough. So those who were able threw themselves upon horses, and for a little time there was a lively chase and fusillade going on. *En passant* it may be stated that some horses starting with a load upon their backs continued the flight with empty saddles.

Thaddeus, still panting with exertion, and grasping the royal sword that had stood between his beloved

and death, staggered toward the diligence, from the door of which sprang a little form that with a cry of joy wrapped her arms about his neck and then fainted in his fierce embrace—fainted from sheer joy.

## CHAPTER XL.

## PEACE—WITH HONOR.

THAT was a proud moment for Thaddeus when he once more held in his arms the being who was all the world to him, and realized that she had been again saved mainly through his instrumentality.

Mlle. Nina's swoon was of very short duration, for in answer to her lover's passionate appeals and kisses she speedily opened her eyes.

The clamor of battle had died away—those of the Turks who were able to mount had fled from the scene of carnage, and the dreadful roar of firearms no longer burst upon the ear.

Sir Giles' voice was heard calling, asking Thaddeus to come to where he knelt, and to bring Nina if she could stand it.

Then the guardsman remembered.

It was Skoubekoff.

Whatever feelings he had cherished toward the veteran because of his persistent chase of Nina now gave way to those of sympathy.

The young girl eagerly agreed to accompany him, for she had seen this soldier perform prodigies of valor in her defense, and fall covered with wounds.

It was a sad sight.

Skoubekoff was almost gone, but he maintained his soldierly bearing to the very last. When a man has flirted with death for two score years, he is not very apt to tremble at the final touch of the clammy hand upon his heart.

Manfully then Skoubekoff begged her to forgive him—he had no excuse to offer save that he had loved her, and perhaps in thus laying down his life in her behalf he might in a measure atone for the past.

And when he passed away it was with the brave girl's hand in his, while her tears fell upon his smiling face.

Thus one warrior left this earth—it was a fate he had always anticipated, for what better can a soldier desire than to die in battle. Skoubekoff, veteran of Plevna and faithful servant of the czar, had rendered up his account. Thaddeus could never remember him with bitterness, and in the years to come many times would this last scene arise in his mind, so that he could again in fancy see the Russian on one knee, surrounded by ferocious Bashi Bazouks, endeavoring with his broken blade to defend the girl in the diligence.

From this spot Thaddeus was leading the weeping

Nina, when suddenly she uttered a scream, and dropping his arm sprang toward a couple of figures that approached, leading horses.

Thaddeus received a little shock when he saw her arms around one of these, apparently a young Greek officer; but steadying himself he was able to grasp the truth.

Of course it was Robert.

A strange freak of fortune thus brought him to the sister who had searched far and wide, across the Pacific, over India's coral strand, along the heights of Afghanistan, among the streets of Persia's capital, through Austria and finally amid the tempest's roar and the tumult of battle.

Thaddeus was rejoiced to know the long search had at last come to an end, and he greeted this brother most cordially.

And then came the O'Shaughnessy—what a rush he made for his beloved captain. The meeting was mutually warm, for not only did memories of past associations stir Thaddeus, but the opportune arrival of Rory and his comrades had been the means of saving them all.

This was no place to loiter.

The Turks were swarming through the neighboring country, and in more than one quarter the distant report of firearms proclaimed a meeting between deadly foes.

Wretched Thessaly was being enveloped in the folds of the anaconda that had crossed the northern barrier, and her sons and daughters fled in terror from the foe.

The diligence was readily repaired and turned the other way. Upon the top they placed the body of poor Skoubekoff, wrapped in a robe. It was the wish of Thaddeus that the brave Russian who had died in defense of Nina should have a soldier's burial, with taps sounded, and a last volley fired over his grave. This was all he could do to show how he had forgiven his determined rival—Skoubekoff had lost everything, while he had won, and lived to enjoy happiness—surely he could afford to be magnanimous.

The road was in places choked with fugitives, but they managed to push on.

Thaddeus rode alongside the coach in company with Sir Giles and the fighting Irish free lance, while Robert sat with his sister.

No doubt they exchanged full confidences during that journey. Thaddeus was later taken into the conference, and entrusted with the snatches of family history that enabled him to understand the reason of Robert's wanderings.

It does not concern us a particle, so there is not the slightest necessity of speaking of it again. The death of Robert's father altered the condition of affairs, and



he was now quite willing to return home with Nina, after the war was over.

No one doubted but that this time was at hand, as the Powers would never permit the Turks to advance further upon Athens. Both sides had aired their patriotism, the Greeks had proved that though numerically inferior, they were man for man equal to the fierce soldiers of the Porte.

They had the sad satisfaction of seeing the Russian buried with military honors. When Prince Constantin heard the whole story from Thaddeus' lips, and learned how heroically Skoubekoff had kept a score of wild Bashi Bazouks at bay, piling the ground with his victims, he not only gave orders that all honor should be paid the Muscovite warrior, but stood beside the open grave with bared head, and personally gave the signal for the last volley.

It was a most impressive scene, one which every true soldier longs to have carried out in the event of his death—*taps*, lights out, and the parting volley—they have sounded over the grave of many a valiant warrior in far-away India, on mountain and plain, in the heart of American forests, and in crowded cemetery where heroes of wars fought for the nation's honor lie buried. The fighting between Turk and Greek, so far as ageneral engagement was concerned, had now become a thing of the past.

Of course not a day passed without some small affairs transpiring, but the Porte had heard something drop—all Europe called a halt, and had the Turks dared to disobey no doubt they would presently have run up against something a little more difficult to overcome than the half-disciplined army of King George.

Negotiations were under way for peace.

Meanwhile both sides remained on the alert and the Greeks were laying their plans in such a way that in the event of hostilities being suddenly resumed they could spring a surprise in the shape of a master stroke upon Edhem's forces.

We all know the result, and that after a long and anxious delay peace eventually settled upon the distracted land.

The war, which at one time threatened to embroil the whole of Europe, was over. Much blood had been spilled, millions of treasure expended, devastation scattered broadcast, and national honor satisfied, yet little or no result attained on either side. Hasten the day when arbitration shall take the place of bloody war, and all differences between nations settled through diplomacy rather than by the arbitrament of arms.

Alas! that optimistic period is a long way off, judging from the vast armies and navies employed by the most enlightened nations of the world. For centuries to come peace will be more apt to dwell over Europe

because of the terrible engines of destruction modern science has invented, rather than through neighborly love.

But we are done with war.

Thaddeus and Robert became great friends during the weeks they spent in the Greek camps. Finally, as peace seemed assured, they departed for Athens, accompanied by Sir Giles, Rory, the American girl, and her maid.

The O'Shaughnessy had concluded to accompany them to London for a visit, ere returning to his post at Teheran.

Nor did any of them find the least difficulty in guessing the reason—Hawkins was the magnet that drew him—Rory had capitulated to the charms of the English maid, and meant to bear her away with him in the end.

Our task draws near an end.

When we have followed those in whose fortunes we are so deeply interested, through the various strange adventures by field and flood that marked Nina's long search for her lost brother, and finally reached the peaceful haven that rewarded their efforts, there is little more to tell. No sooner does the vessel arrive in the harbor than the fearful dangers that have threatened to overwhelm her passengers are mellowed and almost forgotten in the happiness of present safety.

Our friends left Greece at Athens.

The capital was bordering upon the throes of revolution, and a strong hand alone kept the peace. Against his good judgment King George had by popular clamor been forced into this unequal war, the people believing they would be aided by some other nation; but alone they had been compelled to meet the vast army of Turks pouring over their northeastern border. History will do them the justice to say they fought bravely—even the surprised Turks, who had boasted of their anticipated pleasant walk to Athens, confessed to that.

A pleasant voyage over summer seas brought our little party to London in time to enjoy the festivities of the grand queen's jubilee.

Thaddeus was the happiest man in London—though the O'Shaughnessy did venture to dispute the claim.

Sir Giles had other plans ahead and took his farewell of the party, promising to visit them and keep in communication. He had arranged to join a party who intended to hunt elephants in the mainland of Zanzibar. Sir Giles could never bear to remain idle—whether he engaged in war or thrilling hunting scenes was all the same to him—his brush was ever eager to picture remarkable scenes, and the artist always took things in that peculiar matter-of-fact cool way which distinguished him during the awful wreck of the *Talisman*; for Sir Giles was a fatalist in his heart.

Of course Thaddeus is no longer a lone British bachelor. Nina consented to give up her liberty in the following fall, and there can be no question regarding their complete happiness. When one has to win a wife by the sword, it may be taken for granted he will cherish her devotedly. As for the O'Shaughnessy, he still serves the shah, and content in the adoration of his pretty Poll, never dreams of following the Persian custom of his royal master with regard to a superfluity of wives—one is all he can manage.

THE END.









